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Written off

DN EXCLUSIVE

A quarter of UK colleges and universities have not accepted a single disabled student onto their journalism courses in the last three years, according to a new *DN* survey, the first of its kind.

This month, *DN* launches a campaign, backed by industry leaders, to increase the number of disabled journalists and journalism students.

Of the 44 institutions approached for the survey, only five said disabled students make up more than five per cent of their courses. Yet disabled people represent 20 per cent of the working population.

The survey findings also seem to indicate that many disabled people applying for journalism courses have dyslexia and mental health problems.

People with mobility or sensory impairments are much less likely to train as journalists.

Mary Wilkinson, editor of *Disability Now*, said: "From our experience of recruitment, we know that disabled journalists are few and far between. This must change."

"Encouraging more disabled people into journalism will increase the diversity of the industry and improve disability awareness generally."

The 44 colleges and universities from England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland were chosen because they offer at least one journalism course accredited either by the National Council for the Training of Journalists (NCTJ) or the Broadcast Journalism Training Council (BJTC).

Some of the leading providers of journalism courses failed to respond to the survey, despite having six weeks to reply, and in many cases more

than three months.

DN's campaign is supported by the NCTJ, the BJTC and the National Union of Journalists (NUJ).

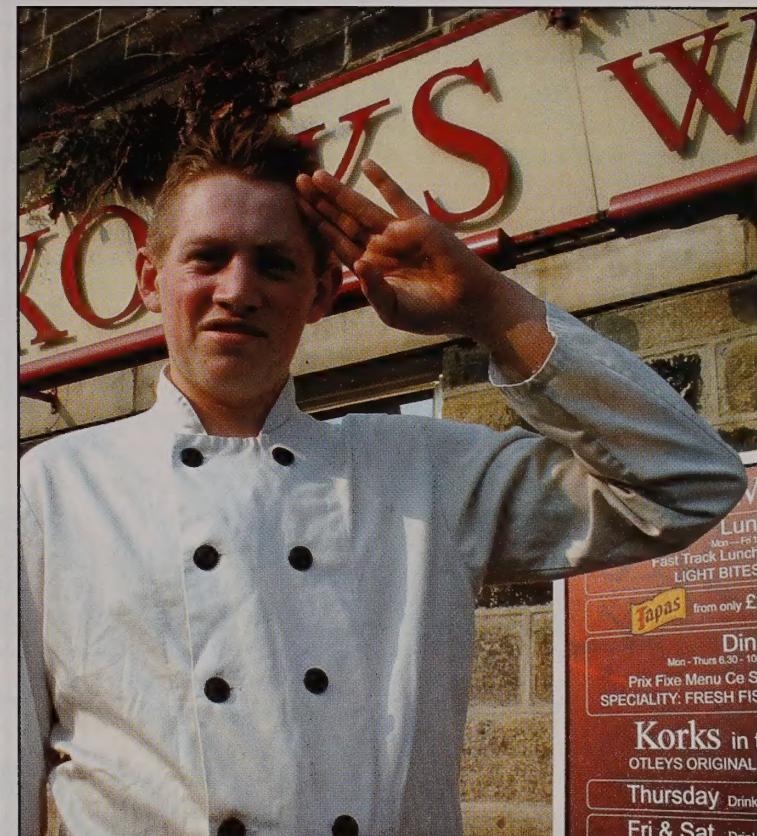
Jeremy Dear, NUJ general secretary, said: "You could go to a hundred newsrooms in the country and do a survey and not find a single disabled journalist working there."

Joanne Butcher, NCTJ's chief executive, said the numbers of disabled people on journalism courses was "unacceptable".

And Jim Latham, secretary of the BJTC, said more must be done to attract more disabled people into journalism.

Industry figures have called for the use of disabled role models to encourage disabled people into the industry, a "fundamental cultural shift" in the media's attitude to disabled journalists and for courses to do more to attract disabled applicants.

See journalism survey, p26-27



Sign of the times: Paul Maxwell, a deaf trainee chef, signs "hello" to promote the British Deaf Association's Learn to Sign Week. Paul works at Korks restaurant in Otley. The week aimed to encourage non-deaf people to learn a few words in British Sign Language.

On the cover: Catherine Bowditch and the Disability Rights Commission's (DRC) Will Dingli, at the launch of the DRC's new Disability Discrimination Act campaign, Open4All. See page 5.

Benefit tests improving but still falling short

Medical assessments for disability benefits are improving, according to a new report from the National Audit Office*, but the service is still "unacceptable" say campaigners.

DN reported in March that many disabled people were being badly treated during examinations and wrongfully denied benefits.

The recent assessment found Schlumberger Sema, the company with the government contract to run medical examinations, had met most of its service quality targets, such as those on waiting times.

Complaints had been reduced to less than one in 200 examinations, and the number of substandard reports

had been halved.

But it found the number of decisions overturned at appeal "remains high", despite steps to improve the standard of doctors' reports, with 54 per cent of Disability Living Allowance appeals upheld.

And feedback about doctors who are responsible for assessments shown to be unreliable at appeal is not getting through.

Lorna Reith, of Disability Alliance, welcomed the improvements but said the service had started from a very low level.

"The number of complaints might have gone down but they can't be taken as a true reflection of customer satisfaction."

Schlumberger Sema were not available for comment.

faced with both putting in a complaint and appealing won't do both. They will concentrate on the appeal. Many don't know they can complain, or they are scared to do so.

"The government can't get complacent. 25,000 people a year are being turned away from assessment centres because they have overbooked appointments. It's just not acceptable."

A lawyer representing disabled people in appeals denied that the service had improved.

She told *DN*: "We are still getting doctors writing the same medical reports regardless of what people's disability is."

Schlumberger Sema were not available for comment.

* www.nao.gov.uk

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Contents



Pg 6

News

| | |
|--|------|
| Top stories | 1-10 |
| Health news | 11 |
| Sport | 12 |
| News Focus | 18 |
| - The first Disabled People's Parliament | |

Features

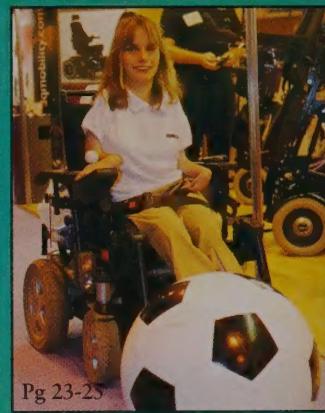
| | |
|--|-------|
| Party conferences | 14-17 |
| - Reports from Blackpool, Brighton and Bournemouth | |
| Profile | 20 |
| - Mike Bruton, Mayor of Windsor and Maidenhead | |
| Checkout | 23-25 |
| - The Independent Living Exhibition | |
| Survey | 26-27 |
| - Disabled people on journalism courses | |

My job

| | |
|----------------------------|----|
| - Victoria Eathorne, nurse | 28 |
| Cycling | 35 |
| - Allan Sutherland reports | |

Regulars

| | |
|-----------------------|-------|
| Letters to the editor | 22 |
| Arts | 31 |
| Parent's voice | 33 |
| Share your problems | 36 |
| Take a break | 38 |
| Information | 40 |
| Classified | 41-46 |
| Up for grabs | 47 |



Pg 23-25

www.disabilitynow.org.uk

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Students ignored

The first report* of a taskforce advising the government on fairer university admissions made no mention of the disadvantages faced by disabled students.

The Admissions to Higher Education Steering Group was set up ahead of plans to develop an Office for Fairer Access which could in future regulate universities' right to charge top-up fees.

Although it is unlawful to discriminate against disabled students in admissions, campaigners say universities are still not actively reaching out to potential disabled students and a financial incentive is needed.

Jenny Knox, of campaigning

charity Skill, said: "Universities' strategies on widening participation do not have to include disability, and the way funding is allocated for disabled students means there is no real incentive to increase their numbers."

"Until universities get a push from government, they won't take this on board."

She said admissions tutors needed training on disability awareness to stop them making uninformed assumptions about whether students could be included.

Campaigners warned in *DN* in May that the government's drive to widen access needed to

take account of the disadvantages faced by pupils who have attended special schools or been absent through disability.

A Department for Education and Skills spokesman said admissions were a matter for universities themselves but the government had extended anti-discrimination laws to the sector and provided extra funding to help it adapt.

Disabled Students' Allowances were available to cover the extra costs faced by disabled students, he said.

*To respond to the consultation, visit: www.admissions-review.org.uk



Spars and stripes: David Stephenson won the natural history print category of the 2003 Disabled Photographers' Society's Annual Exhibition with his photograph "Fighting backstage".

An exhibition of the winning pictures runs until 10 November at Queen Mary's College, Basingstoke. Tel: 01256 351990

DN CAMPAIGN



An end to flightmares

to airports and aeroplanes.

The forum hopes the new legislation will also raise awareness of the issue of lost and damaged wheelchairs by airlines, although this will not be covered by the new laws.

The air transport industry is unhappy about the plans and is lobbying the European Commission over its proposals.

Andrew Clarke, director of air transport policy for the European Regions Airline Association (ERA), said the proposal was unfair because it applied only to air transport.

Draft legislation will be published in December and would not become law before 2006.

See also page 8.

Victory for abuse survivors



Families of the survivors at court

Learning disabled survivors of abuse at two residential homes have won a nine-year battle for justice, after the council that failed to prevent and halt the regime agreed to pay an estimated £1 million in damages.

Buckinghamshire County Council apologised in the High Court for the "shortcomings" in its registration and inspection procedures that "increased the risk" of abuse at the Longcare homes, near Slough.

Families of many of the 54 victims were at court to hear the settlement announced.

Their lawyers said they were "angry" and "appalled" that the council only settled the case

on the day a week-long trial was due to start.

Pauline Hennessey, whose sister Janet was raped and abused at Longcare, said she held the council "ultimately responsible" for the crimes committed.

"I just hope that now, as a result of this case, applications to register care homes are scrutinized much more carefully... and that proper inspections are carried out so that no other person with a learning disability has to go through what Janet and the other residents at Longcare had to endure."

John Pring's book about the case, Silent Victims, is published by Gibson Square.

New European laws should put an end to the poor treatment disabled people receive when boarding aircraft.

The European Commission (EC) is working on new legislation after the failure of voluntary codes of practice to meet disabled people's needs.

A spokeswoman for the European Disability Forum, which is working on the draft legislation, said not enough airlines signed up to the voluntary code, so too many disabled people are still receiving poor quality assistance.

The new rules are likely to set standards for assistance provision, ensure disabled passengers are not charged extra for services, and improve access

Disability councils for East Europe

Disabled people in Eastern European countries have followed in the footsteps of the British Council of Disabled People by setting up national disability councils for the first time.

Organisations of disabled people in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Slovenia have united to form national

umbrella organisations to campaign on disability issues.

Hungary, Slovakia and Romania are set to follow, thanks to a project by the European Disability Forum, working in countries due to join the EU in the next four years.

Jeanpaul Pritchard, project manager, said: "These were socialist and communist countries where disabled people

were very hidden away from view and rights weren't historically well understood."

Meanwhile 160 disabled people and personal assistants have marched to Strasbourg to present demands to the European parliament.

They include policies on personal assistance and action against the growing number of people being institutionalised.

In brief

Court campaign

Disabled people are being targeted as part of a £4 million government campaign* to increase the number of magistrates over the next three years.

The government will work with disabled people's organisations and use leaflets as well as bus and radio adverts to attract disabled people.

*For more information call freephone 0800 003007

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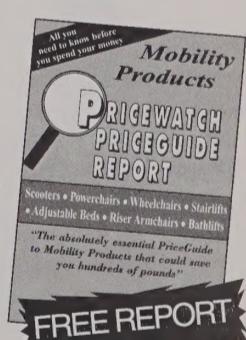
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'Good news' from Motability

A raft of changes to the Motability car schemes have been welcomed as good news for disabled drivers.

They include cuts of up to £500 in the cost of leasing a car for contract hire customers.

Customers who do not pay a deposit will also now be able to choose from about 200 models, rather than 40, and those who are not at fault in accidents should have their £75 insurance excess refunded more quickly.

Other improvements include a new local rate customer helpline*, customers allowed to keep their old car until the new one is ready, and drivers of highly adapted or wheelchair accessible vehicles to be allowed to extend their contracts.

Douglas Campbell, DN's

motoring correspondent and chief executive of the Disabled Drivers' Association, said the changes would improve affordability if permanent, although some details needed clarification.

"What I like about it more than anything is it shows a positive attitude to customer service," he said.

But the changes have come at a cost. Motability Operations, which runs the car schemes, is set to cut between 50 and 80 of its 850 jobs, on top of the 90 redundancies in January.

• Don Brereton, director of the disabilities and carers group in the Department for Work and Pensions, has been appointed the new director of the Motability charity.

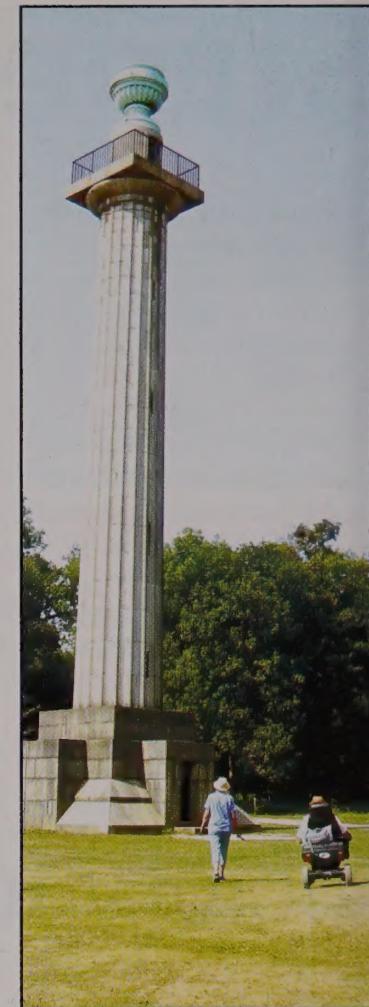
*Tel: 0845 4564566



Open hills: Sue Watson (above, left) and Robin Helby ramble across the South Downs Way as part of their 100-mile trip from Winchester to Beachy Head. The eight day journey on all-terrain electric scooters raised £2,000 for disabled ramblers.

Meanwhile disabled ramblers (right, in front of the Ashridge monument) can also enjoy the Chiltern Hills thanks to a new pack* of 11 walks suitable for wheelchair users, mobility scooters and people with impaired mobility. Most of the walks are on level hard surfaces.

*Available from the Chilterns Conservation Board tel: 01844 271300



Council panned over toilet plans

Campaigners fear that up to 20 disabled toilets could be closed as part of a re-organisation of public conveniences by a Welsh council.

Carmarthenshire County Council is assessing all public toilets in the county according to how often they are used, how often they are vandalised and whether they are in tourist areas.

They are also taking into account whether the toilets meet the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act.

Concerns have been raised by residents that some communities could be left without access to a disabled toilet.

The toilet in the village of Llanwdra is one of those set to be shut. Residents will be sever-

al miles from a disabled toilet.

Clive Poulton, a disability rights campaigner, claims more than 80 per cent of disabled toilets in the county are only open during restricted hours.

A spokeswoman for the council told DN no community which needed a disabled toilet would be left without access to one.

Teens still excluded in mainstream schools

Disabled teenagers in mainstream schools are excluded from after-school clubs, lessons, the school bus, sport and trips, according to new research by a 16-year-old student.

Eleni Burgess's report* looked at the experience of 80 wheelchair users in secondary schools to see how close UK schools are to achieving integration.

The report was funded by the Whizz Kidz No Limits Millennium Fund, as part of a National Lottery grant scheme.

It shows that after-school activities are off-limits because of inflexible special transport services and a lack of support staff.

Subject choices are also reduced, with 36 per cent saying they had difficulties studying IT, music or technology because of poor access.

And disabled students have

to travel further to go to school, with one third of those questioned unable to attend their local school.

Even "accessible" schools often have heavy doors and steps, which undermine independence and reduce access. Seven out of 10 pupils questioned said they missed part of each class because of difficulties getting around.

Eleni said: "Are we nearly there yet? No. I have a dream that every school will be staffed with teachers that include us in school trips and timetable our lessons in rooms we can reach."

**Are We Nearly There Yet?* is available free to individuals and £3 to organisations. Tel: 0161 449 9635 or email: arewenearlytheryet@btopenworld.com

• Eleni has written this month's Teen Spirit column on page 22

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In brief

Kids to benefit

Disabled children will benefit from the launch of the government's first 61 "extended schools" which will provide a one-stop-shop for education as well as family, community and health services.

Services such as speech therapy, physiotherapy and counselling as well as arts and sports training will be available on the school site.

Russell leaves CDC

Philippa Russell CBE is leaving her post as director of the Council for Disabled Children (CDC) after nearly 30 years.

She will continue working for disabled children as a consultant for the National Children's Bureau.

Christine Lenehan will become the CDC's new director. She was previously its principal development officer.

Lenehan said taking over from Russell was the "best possible inheritance".

New voice for mental health bill protestors

Mental health service users are to form a national campaigning network following claims that major charities are failing to represent them.

At a conference in London last month, campaigners from all over the UK, many of whom have only recently become involved in direct action through their opposition to the government's draft mental health bill, voted to set up an alliance of "users and survivors".

Many lost faith in mainstream charities after they pulled out of a march last September against the mental health bill because of fears of

negative reactions following the Soham killings.

Simon Pryce, founder of Protest Against the Mental Health Bill (PAB), an online community of mental health campaigners who kick-started the conference, said: "It appears a lot of people are interested in the problems surrounding mental health legislation.

"But the genuine user voice is missing in the debate. The government says it consults users and survivors, but it's actually only a very small number.

"We want to provide a direct voice, instead of something filtered through various non-sur-

vivor run charities."

He said the alliance would unite people from across the spectrum of mental health diagnoses, giving it a strong claim to being representative of service users as a whole.

The alliance is likely to target the same sources of funding as better-known mental health charities.

Richard Brook, chief executive of charity MIND, said there was room for "a broad range of ways in which service users can express their views".

But he stressed that MIND had strong processes for involving service users.

Winners get the message

The Centre for Accessible Environments (CAE) was one of ten winners at this year's Getting the Message Across Awards.

CAE produced a film to help service providers meet the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 2004.

Other awards were given to a health information website, an information and advice service for people with learning diffi-

culties and a benefits audit for disabled people and carers.

The National Society for Epilepsy and the Edinburgh-based Special Needs Information Point also gained recognition for producing accessible literature.

The annual event was organised by the National Information Forum.

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Open wide or closed doors? Nicola Tustain at the launch of Open4All

and terrify businesses and give a bad name to all of us," he said.

"There'll be another group of people who'll be very smooth and gold-plate the service. Every ramp will have to have so many jingle bells on it and the price will go up. And as the price goes up, it becomes

unreasonable and businesses won't have to do it."

Massie said it was "critical" that people kept to the code of practice set out by the DRC.

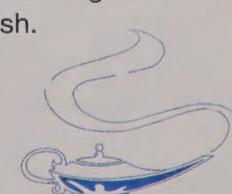
A website, www.open4all.org, has also been launched to provide advice on the Disability Discrimination Act.



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No direction from social workers

Disabled people's experiences of direct payments are still dependent on the social worker they get, seven months after it became compulsory for councils to offer the scheme.

Research* into cash-for-personal care by the charity Scope found 19 out of 30 families who were using the scheme had not heard about it through social services, but through sources like the internet.

The majority had to convince social services that direct

payments existed and that they were eligible for the payments.

The report found that where direct payments were working well, they were revolutionising people's lives.

But people were often pushed into taking up direct payments because of bad experiences with statutory services, rather than through choice.

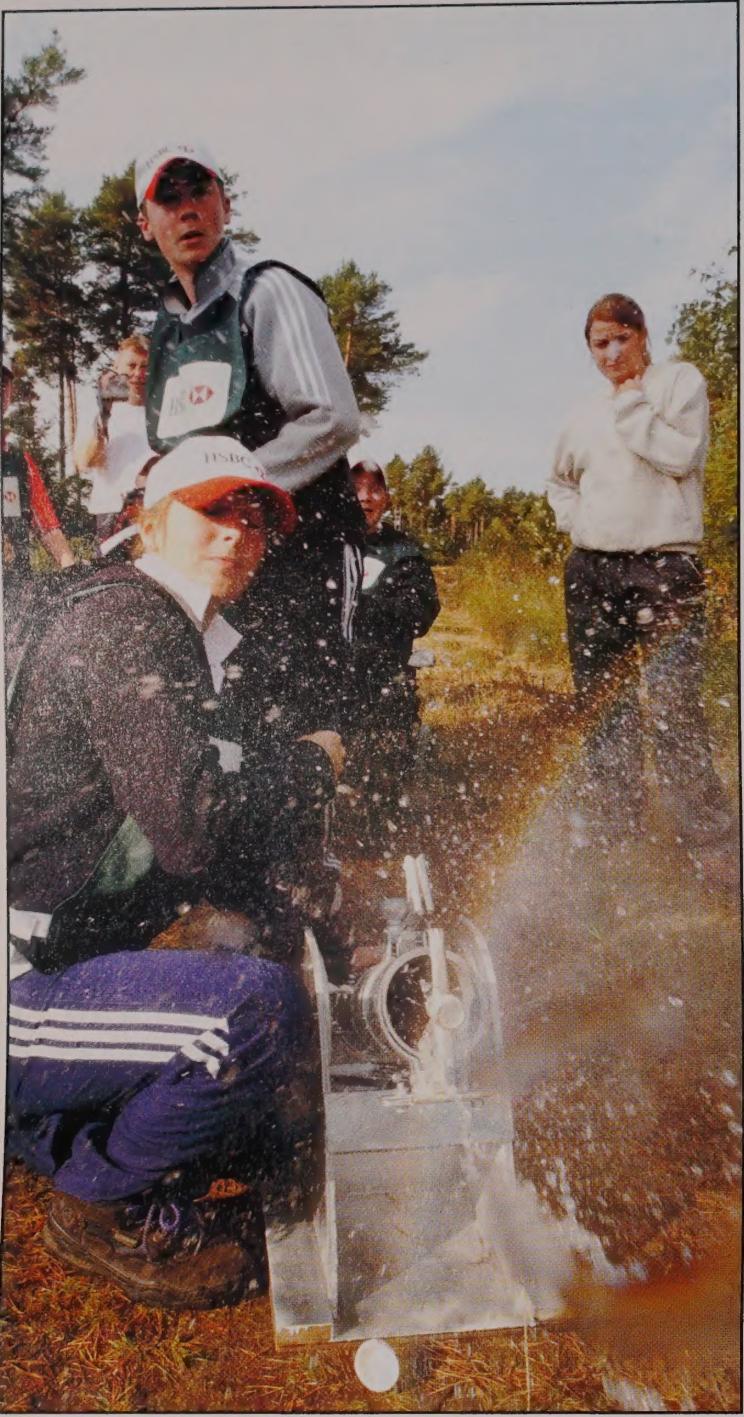
The report calls for direct payments to be a compulsory part of the new social work degree and for government to

monitor their take-up.

The Department for Work and Pensions said providers of social work degree courses should make sure their teaching was continually updated to keep abreast of developments and "this should include input on direct payments".

A spokeswoman said the take-up of direct payments was already monitored.

*The Direct Approach, see www.scope.org.uk



Making a splash: teams of disabled and non-disabled teenagers compete in the final of the Kielder Challenge, an annual competition organised by Fieldfare Trust in Kielder forest, Northumberland. For further information, call 0115 950 8415 or email kielderchallenge@fieldfare.org.uk

Bus lottery un-fare

A disabled man has called on the government to end the bus fare postcode lottery.

William Gray, who lives in Rayleigh, Essex, has to pay half-fare to travel on local buses whereas elderly and disabled people in Scotland and Wales receive free bus travel and those living in London receive free bus and tube travel.

Gray, who has a slipped disc, finds the bus expensive and has to climb a "very steep hill" to go shopping, which takes him "several attempts".

"The half-fare is about £1 to town, half a mile. It's disgusting – a lot out of your pension."

"Morally, all disabled people should be allowed free travel," he said.

The government's Transport Act 2000 says local authorities in England must provide half-fares for people over 60 and disabled people on local buses. Authorities can subsidise further if they choose.

Andy Kirby, of the Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee, said they are awaiting

the publication of research into the problem. He added that access is not just about the levels of fare, because free travel is irrelevant if transport is inaccessible.

A spokesman for Rochford District Council said: "As far as Essex is concerned, a free bus pass is not on the cards."

A Department of Transport spokeswoman said the 2000 act had led to a "considerable improvement", but there were "no plans" for any further legislation.

Scot survey

Two-thirds of Scots believe disability rights could be improved and 68 percent of them want their country to do all it can to banish all forms of prejudice, according to a new survey.

More than 1,600 people were questioned about their attitudes to discrimination in the first survey* of its kind in Europe.

The results were broadly welcomed by Bob Benson, Scottish director of the Disability Rights Commission (DRC).

"It is good to report the core message is a positive one – most people think holding discriminatory attitudes is wrong," he said.

The commission hopes a similar survey may take place in England in the future.

**Attitudes to Discrimination in Scotland is available from www.scotland.gov.uk/socialresearch*

Lights stay on at Lantern



Ann Stevens, who has had polio and lives across the road from The Lantern, said: "I was very, very pleased indeed."

"It would be a complete crime if it was pulled down and turned into flats."

"It has at the very least to break even by next September, otherwise the decision will be taken very definitely to close it at the next AGM."

"We feel very positive, but there is much to be done."

*For information on bookings, call The Lantern on local rate number 0845 4500227

In brief

New website opens

A new, accessible and interactive website will provide news, features and information to blind and partially-sighted people around the world.

The site* has been set up with help from the Royal National Institute of the Blind and 40 other similar bodies.

* www.visionconnection.org

Free prescriptions

All Welsh people are to have free prescriptions, under new Welsh Assembly plans.

Jane Hutt, the Health and Social Services Minister, said free prescriptions for all was the "simplest and most effective way" of removing prescription charge anomalies.

The change to free prescriptions will take place in phases, with the first £1 reduction next October. They will be free in 2007.

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New "Viva" Lower Body model

DN CAMPAIGN

Cannabis bill is £500 a month

Disabled people are spending up to £500 each month on cannabis, according to initial results from DN's survey.

The survey was launched as the British Medical Journal published research showing that while cannabis is "not harmless", long-term cannabis use does not lead to death.

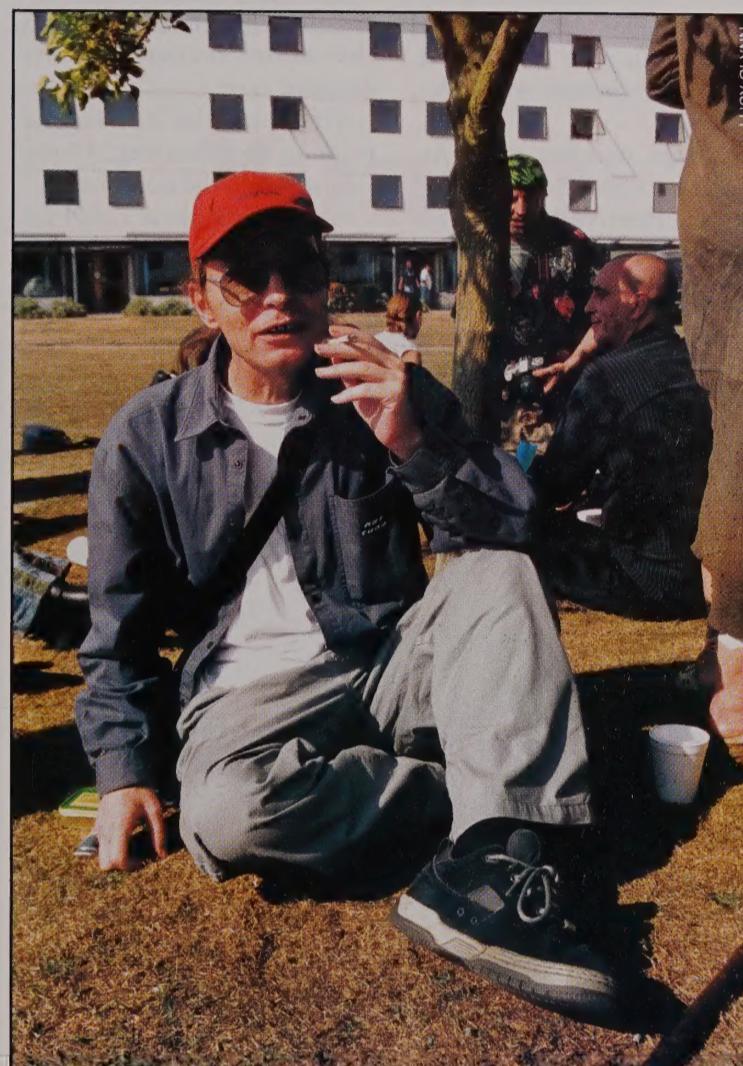
Disabled people who use cannabis find it greatly improves their quality of life, but DN's early results show many disabled people have problems obtaining it.

And even when G W Pharmaceuticals produces its cannabis spray they think they will still have to buy cannabis illegally because it won't be prescribed for their disability.

Ex-soldier Jimmy Wells, who has post traumatic stress disorder, spends a minimum of £500 a month thanks to website donations.

"I am an ordinary peaceful guy in need of marijuana as there is no other known treatment for my condition," he said.

Jeff Ditchfield, who sells cannabis, cannabis cream and capsules to disabled people, said people think if you are involved in cannabis you are a criminal. "I used to be very careful, then I thought, 'Sod it, I'm not in the wrong. It's the law



Vincent Bunch, above, spends £75 a month on cannabis to help his ms

that's wrong."

At the Legalise Cannabis Alliance annual conference in September, national coordinator Alan Buffry called for the legalisation of cannabis, saying prohibition puts people, especially

those with disabilities, at risk from poor quality "soapbar" cannabis. He said this is poisonous as it contains less than 10 per cent cannabis mixed with beeswax, henna, coffee and dyes.

No support for parents

Disabled parents still face the assumption by professionals that their children are at greater risk of deprivation or abuse and would be better off with non-disabled parents, according to new research.

The report of the Task Force on Supporting Disabled Adults in their Parenting Role, set up in 2000 by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, paints a dismal picture of support offered to disabled parents.

Often support could only be accessed once a child was classified as being "at risk" and therefore eligible for services under the Children Act, or as a "young carer".

Jenny Morris, author of *The Right Support*, said assess-

ments of care needs tended to focus on parental capacity instead of the support that would enhance parents' ability to look after their children.

She added: "In theory, disabled parents are entitled to receive an assessment of their needs and to be offered direct payments, but we've consistently heard evidence of situations when the only help offered is for their child to carry on being a 'young carer'.

"There's also evidence of children being removed without an assessment of any support being offered."

The taskforce called for the Department of Health to produce a national protocol

and practice guidelines to ensure community care assessments included parenting needs.

It also expressed concern that planned Children's Trusts would worsen gaps between children's and adults' services.

Stephen Ladyman, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Community Care, welcomed the report and called for service users to be "truly listened to".

The new social work degree, guidelines for local authorities on supporting parents with learning disabilities, and revised guidance on direct payments would contribute to this, he said.

DN's Cannabis Survey 2003

Please fill in this form, even if you have completed a DN cannabis survey before, because it has new questions. Continue answers on extra paper if you wish. Names and contact details will be treated in the strictest confidence.

Name _____

Age _____

Disability _____

Tel number/email address _____

Have you ever taken cannabis for medicinal purposes? Yes/No

If yes, when did you start?

If no, would you consider buying non-prescribed cannabis if it became legal?

What form of cannabis do you take and why?

Does the cannabis relieve your condition?

How easy is it to obtain?

How much do you spend on cannabis per month?

Does your GP a) know and b) approve?

Does your consultant a) know and b) approve?

When a prescription cannabis spray becomes available, do you think you will still have to buy cannabis illegally?

Please send this form to Cannabis Survey, DN, Freepost WD4323, London N7 9BR, telephone: 020 7619 7323, or visit www.disabilitynow.org.uk

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Letter from Brussels

Richard Howitt 



Ryanair's £25 levy for disability will soon be a thing of the past

Next month sees the climax of our long running campaign against Ryanair and other low cost airlines for operating discriminatory pricing against disabled air travellers.

Ever since I joined a group from the Essex Coalition of Disabled People to protest at the £25 charge for special assistance levied on disabled Ryanair travellers, I have been determined to end this clear example of discrimination.

Ryanair have sought to deflect criticism by either (falsely) denying the policy exists, or seeking to shift the blame on to airport operators.

The truth is that all the other main airlines absorb the cost of providing special assistance, and offer it free of charge to the disabled passenger. It is estimated that this adds just one or two pence to the price of flights.

We secured European Parliament amendments to reports on the protection of air passengers in the EU and on common rules on compen-

sation to air passengers in the event of denied boarding, which sent a warning signal that European legislation would follow.

Either Ryanair would voluntarily change its policy or we would force it to do so.

They haven't. So, in November, we expect the publication of a new draft regulation on airline contracts and the rights of passengers with reduced mobility.

The new EU law will establish the right to board and will require airlines to provide a package of assistance free of charge to all disabled air passengers.

Meanwhile, I have lobbied the Disability Rights Commission (DRC) to take a case in Britain, despite the fact a grey area exists over the operation of national laws for a service which operates in what some airlines claim to be international territory.

The good news is that the DRC has now done this, and a court case against Ryanair is set for 2 December.

Richard Howitt MEP is president of the European Parliament All-Party Disability Group, e-mail: ep@edf-feph.org

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Tribunals 'ineffective'

Autism charities have slammed the special educational needs and disability tribunal (SENDIST) system amid evidence it is under-funded and ineffective.

A report by the National Autistic Society found rulings by the tribunals, which hear parents' appeals against decisions of local education authorities (LEAs), were often being ignored and changes not implemented.

A large number of LEAs were also making late settlements, effectively using the system to postpone funding support for children.

The report, which surveyed 214 parents, was published alongside research by the Parents Autism Campaign for Education and Parents for the Early Intervention of Autism in Children.

They found the cost of legal representation was limiting access to the tribunal system, with money cited as the main reason parents dropped cases.

Of those who had settled prior to their hearing, 48 per cent said they did not want to.

The charities have called for the government to set up an independent body to

police LEAs and ensure they are implementing tribunal orders and not abusing the system.

They want legal aid extended to tribunal hearings and more money put into special education provision to stop conflicts from occurring.

A Department for Education and Skills spokesman said the government was putting considerable extra resources into SEN provision.

He said the forthcoming SEN Action Programme would provide practical support to schools, LEAs and other agencies.

Digital TV inaccessible

Digital television has been branded inaccessible to many disabled people in a report commissioned by the government*.

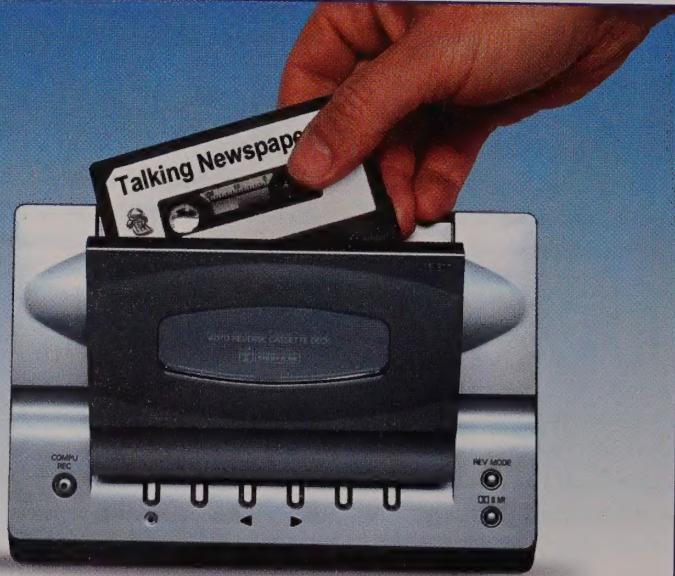
The study, by the consultancy Generics, found that neither broadcasters nor service providers are considering the needs of disabled people when designing products.

Complex menus, the design of remote control devices and a lack of co-ordination between different organisations mean that up to two million people may be unable to access services.

*www.digitaltv.culture.gov.uk/dtv_for_all.html



Pioneering spirit: anti-bullying campaigner Keith Shortman, who has a learning difficulty, met the Queen at Buckingham Palace last month. The Mencap member has spent seven years combatting bullying with the Metropolitan Police.



In brief

£9m for hearing aids

Deaf people in Scotland are to benefit from a £9 million injection into hearing aid services.

The funding over three years is on top of £10.25 million already announced for modernising the service. It will pay for newer equipment, staff and digital hearing aids.

The Royal National Institute for Deaf People welcomed the move.

New boss at RNIB

The Royal National Institute of the Blind (RNIB) has appointed Lesley-Anne Alexander as its new chief executive.

Alexander, who is not disabled, joins the RNIB from the Peabody Trust, a London regeneration and housing association. She will take over from Ian Bruce in January.

News Review

A monthly round-up of news from the mainstream media

Sun slammed

The *Sun* newspaper was criticised for its description of ex-boxer Frank Bruno as "bonkers" and a "nut" who had been "locked up", after he experienced mental health problems.

Although the paper toned down its coverage in later editions, Richard Brook, chief executive of MIND, wrote to the paper's editor calling for a long-term commitment to changing its reporting of mental health. He has so far received no reply.

The Press Complaints Commission is also writing to *The Sun* about its coverage.

Death sparks debate

A disabled man died in France after his mother reportedly put an overdose in his drip following his requests to be helped to end his life.

The 22-year-old was left paralysed and unable to speak following an accident.

The incident has sparked a national debate in the country, where euthanasia remains illegal.

Prosecutors are considering whether to charge the man's mother with murder or manslaughter.

Call for free care

The Royal Commission on Long-Term Care called for the full implementation of its 1999 report recommending free personal care to older people.

A statement said it was "ethically impossible" to justify charging people with conditions like Alzheimer's and motor neurone disease while cancer and other long-term conditions are covered by the NHS.

Ruling delay warning

The Royal National Institute of the Blind said 18,000 people may have gone blind waiting for the National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) to rule on the use of photodynamic therapy (PDT) for age-related macular degeneration.

NICE said it had taken two years to have a full consultation on the recommendations, which will make the treatment available for people with two types of the "wet" form of the condition.

Asian centre goes online

The first computer centre run by and for disabled people from Asian communities has been launched by UK online centres.

The service, opened last month by Paul Boateng MP (*pictured, centre*) at Central Middlesex Hospital, is being targeted at first generation elderly and disabled Asians, their carers and families.

Manager Javaid Iqbal said:

"Users who have never accessed the internet before are now surfing the internet to read Asian newspapers, sending emails to their family and learning new skills."

"The new facilities are really improving people's lives."

UK online offers access to computers and the internet at low cost. Call 0800 77 1234 to find your nearest centre.



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Disabled Jews have 'right to worship'

A new campaign has been launched to make synagogues more accessible to disabled people.

According to Leslie Bunder, editor of website Something Jewish*, over half of all synagogues across the UK are failing to provide facilities for disabled people.

Mr Bunder said he was "shocked" after seeing advertisements placed by UK synagogues in the Jewish media that stated they did not offer facilities for disabled people.

He is pressing for improve-

ments such as better wheelchair access and toilet facilities for disabled visitors.

His campaign aims to put pressure on the boards of synagogues to bring their buildings up to date.

He said: "By not providing facilities, the various synagogue movements are being totally ignorant to the needs of their members."

He told DN: "One of the excuses I hear is that the buildings are so old or traditional that they are somehow exempt from the law."

He added: "Worry over cost is not the most important factor when people are denied their right to worship."

Mr Bunder warned that it might only be a matter of time before a test case is brought under the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) against a place of worship, "whether it be a Hindu temple, a Christian church or a Jewish synagogue".

Because places of worship provide a service to the public, they are covered under the DDA.

*www.somethingjewish.co.uk

Former DN news editor, Rod Hermeston, reports back from the *Disability in Europe* conference in Leeds

Draft bill will promote equality

The draft Disability Bill to be published later this year will include positive duties which will force local councils and health authorities to actively promote disability equality.

The news follows a conference organised by the University of Leeds and the Disability Rights Commission (DRC), at which Colm O'Cinneide, lecturer in law at

University College London, said positive duties would force health authorities to monitor and take action over the low take-up of cervical screening among learning disabled women.

He said these "next generation" duties would have "immense potential to supplement the limitations of our existing anti-discrimination laws".

DN has learned that these duties will be included in the Disability Bill to be published later this year.

Caroline Gooding, special adviser to the DRC, said the duties could cover local authorities, NHS trusts and government departments and agencies.

She said that the change was "vital".



Fundraising drive: Elsie Hall, who lost her sight four years ago, gets behind the wheel again as part of a sponsored driving challenge for blind and partially sighted people at Errol Airfield, near Perth in Scotland, organised by The Guide Dogs for the Blind Association. Car dealer Reg Vardy provided Land Rovers and instruction.

European Year to fail 'key objective'

But he later told DN: "We are quite pessimistic about getting a clear commitment."

"We started the year saying as a way of putting pressure on the commission, that if the year finished without a clear commitment to a directive, the year would be considered a failure."

"From that point of view, the year is a failure."

Labour MEP, Richard Howitt, told the conference that the commission had got "cold feet".

Both men fear that new rights may not appear until well into the next decade.

But Howitt said: "We've got the political opportunities this year and the political momentum at least for the announcement that it will happen."

£1.5m charity boost

Four disability charities will have their work revolutionised by a shared £1.5m lottery cash windfall.

The community fund granted £819,220 to Contact a Family, £370,000 to Canine Partners for Independence, £155,696 to the Disabled Workers Co-operative Limited and £154,643 to the Independent Panel for Special Education Advice (IPSEA).

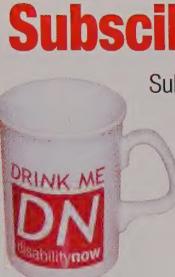
Francine Bates, of Contact a Family, said the grant was a "major breakthrough" and would be used to ensure every

parent of a disabled child gets appropriate support and information from paediatricians.

Canine Partners plans to triple the number of assistance dogs it provides, while the Disabled Workers Co-operative aims to create a national database matching skilled disabled people to customers needing products or services.

IPSEA is to train advocates to work with parents of disabled children who are excluded from school.

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Forced to go private

Wheelchair users in Somerset are being forced to go private to get the services they need, according to a new survey.

The survey by Somerset Access and Inclusion Network (SAIN) was backed by Somerset Social Services, Mendip Primary Care Trust and the charity Leonard Cheshire Foundation.

It found problems with "most aspects of the NHS wheelchair services in Somerset" and concluded that they were slow, inaccessible and of poor quality and led to dis-

abled people turning to private wheelchair suppliers.

It said one of the biggest problems was delays in assessments, reassessments and in obtaining replacement chairs.

The report called for major improvements, and made 11 key recommendations.

Among these were calls for a new organisation "to take clear responsibility for managing the wheelchair services" and provide continuity of care.

The report also called for quicker assessments and local centres with a wide choice of

wheelchairs and equipment and professional and unbiased advice. Those surveyed found many of the problems stemmed from NHS underfunding.

Survey co-ordinator Ann England said she was "shocked" by the findings of the survey.

But she added that strong financial backing for the survey showed there was a "general willingness" to put the problem right.

"Although some good work is being done there is still a long way to go."

Stroke aspirin warning

The son of a woman who had a stroke after she started taking aspirin every day has warned of its possible dangers.

Neil Summers, the inventor who designed the Backstretcher and the Neckstretcher*, said his mother Doris (right) was "fit and healthy, slim and active" until she began taking the drug at the age of 62, four years ago.

He said she was reacting to the "almost deafening media hype" around the drug, which can reduce the chance of heart attacks and some types of stroke.

But he said she didn't realise that aspirin can also increase

the risk of having a brain haemorrhage.

His mother, from Huddersfield, had a brain haemorrhage in March and is now recovering.

Her son said: "Because of the media hype, she put herself on an aspirin a day without the doctor saying it was okay. The message is: only take medicine when it is prescribed for you."

Jerry Doyle, public relations director of The Stroke Association**, said aspirin is often prescribed to prevent blood clots forming but should not be taken to prevent haemorrhagic strokes and can make



this type of stroke worse.

He said people worried about a possible stroke should see their GP.

*www.thebackcoach.com
**For a free factsheet on Aspirin and Stroke, write to the charity at Northampton Resource Centre, 61-69 Derngate, Northampton NN1 1HD or tel 01604 623933

Not for kids: new anti-depressant

The government's drugs safety body has warned that a second anti-depressant drug should not be used by children, amid fears over its side effects.

The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) announced that Efexor (venlafaxine) should not be prescribed to people under 18 years of age.

Its expert working group, set up in April to look at the safety of the selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) group of anti-depressants, acted after new evidence of Efexor's side-effects, such as suicidal thoughts and self-harming behaviour.

Although Efexor was already not recommended for use by under-18s, it was being prescribed "off licence" to around 3,000 children and adolescents.

It follows similar MHRA advice earlier this year which said the SSRI anti-depressant Seroxat should not be used to



Protests earlier in the year against the MHRA

treat people under 18 (DN July).

In the wake of the new advice, mental health charity Mind repeated concerns about the way such drugs are regulated and licensed.

It called for more investment in counselling and alternative therapies for young people.

Mind spokesperson Rhian Thomas told DN: "We feel it is a false economy not to invest in treatments like cognitive behavioural therapy, which is seriously under resourced."

MS drugs slow rate of disability

Two new studies have shown that long-term treatment with the drug glatiramer acetate reduces relapse rates and slows the accumulation of disability for people with the relapsing-remitting form of multiple sclerosis (ms).

One study followed people with ms in the US for up to ten years. The other studied people in Argentina over seven years.

The results, released at the European Committee for Treatment and Research in Multiple Sclerosis conference in Milan, Italy, were welcomed by the MS Trust.

In the US study, more than 60 per cent of people on Copaxone (glatiramer acetate) for ten years "remained stable or improved in terms of accumulated disability".

In the Argentinian study, 60 per cent of people who remained on Copaxone stayed free of relapses for up to seven years.

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Records tumble at CP champs

Three world records were broken at the Cerebral Palsy National Athletics Championships in Nottingham last month.

Stephen Miller set a new world record of 33.49m in the club event and is now looking for his third successive Paralympic gold medal at the 2004 games.

Miller won gold in the club event at Atlanta 1996 and Sydney 2000.

He also took golds in both the club and discus at the European Championships earlier this year.

Daniel West (pictured left) also set a new world record, increasing his own F34 discus record by 24cm to 35.52m.

But West, who won a bronze in the discus event at Sydney 2000, is hoping to do even better next year.

"I've been throwing well and consistently this season," he said.

"I will be building up my strength through the winter and will hopefully be in good shape next year," he added.

Steve Evans set a new world record with a throw of 11.68m in the F31 club competition.

Basketball women must fight for Athens place

Great Britain's women's wheelchair basketball squad gave European champions Germany a run for their money in a three-match series held in Essex.

Britain came within one point of causing an upset in the opening match, losing by 51 points to 50.

But that was their best performance and Germany went on to win the second match by 54 points to 37 and the third 50-34.

Captain Ann Wild and Sonia Howe both scored 23 points over the three matches.

Charlie Bethel, GB national manager, praised the team's performance and new coach Dan McCaffrey.

"Despite losing all three games these were our best performances against Germany in many years, perhaps ever," he said.

Having finished third at the European Championships earlier this year, the team has technically qualified for the 2004 Paralympics but the British Paralympic Association (BPA) has not yet said whether they will definitely go.

Phil Lane, chief executive of the BPA, said 1000 athletes in 14 sports are currently vying for places but they can only take a team of 220 athletes.

Lane told Britain's top disabled athletes they will be expected to win medals if they are picked to attend the Athens games and said "selection standards will be tougher than ever before".

"The expectation will be for athletes to perform at or above their personal best and win medals."

"There will be no free rides."



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In brief

Brit is tennis no. 1

Britain's Peter Norfolk is the best quadriplegic singles tennis player in the world, according to the latest International Tennis Federation rankings.

Norfolk took the World number one spot from David Wegner of the US when he defeated him in the final of the Professional Tennis Registry Championships.

New swim chances

Swimmers with Down's syndrome will be able to compete in more international competitions after the establishment of the Down's syndrome International Swimming Organisation.

The organisation is looking for swimmers to take part in the second world championships in South Africa in 2004. For more information, visit www.dsiso.org or phone 0118 066 5998.

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Introduction of INDEPENDENCE™ iGLIDE™ Manual Assist Wheelchair Revolutionizes Category With New Technology



Independence Technology, a Johnson & Johnson company, has announced the availability of the **INDEPENDENCE™ iGLIDE™** Manual Assist Wheelchair. The **iGLIDE™** Manual Assist Wheelchair operates similarly to a conventional manual wheelchair, but uses proprietary technology to supplement user input power. To the user, the **iGLIDE™** Manual Assist Wheelchair feels like a much lighter chair moving over a flat, smooth surface regardless of the terrain. Sensors and microprocessors provide motorized assistance, requiring much less effort from the user than required in a traditional manual wheelchair.

To move with the **iGLIDE™** Manual Assist Wheelchair, the user simply pushes the handrims as if propelling a standard manual wheelchair. The patented technology of the **iGLIDE™** Manual Assist Wheelchair monitors both the user's input and the resulting motion, determining the appropriate level of additive power to provide a similar feel even when ascending or descending ramps or crossing resistive terrain such as grass or soft carpet. To the casual observer, there is little perceived difference when viewing the contemporarily designed **iGLIDE™** Manual Assist Wheelchair, compared to a regular manual wheelchair. To the **iGLIDE™** Manual Assist

Wheelchair user, however, there is a remarkable difference.

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system that provides the user with discreet power assistance. At approximately 55 pounds, the **iGLIDE™** Manual Assist Wheelchair was designed for easy transport, with quick-release wheels, battery removal and fold-down seatback.

Independence Technology: A Company with a Mission

The company mission is to develop products and technology applications that help people with disabilities live their lives with greater freedom. With this product, Johnson & Johnson extends its tradition of innovative health care service to a community of nearly six million people worldwide who use wheelchairs.

The independent **iBOT™** Mobility System has now been approved by the FDA and will be available in the UK by the end of the year. The **iBOT™** Mobility System operates on rechargeable battery power and uses a complex system of sensors, gyroscopes and electronics to simulate balance, enabling users to climb and descend stairs, navigate

variable terrain, ascend kerbs and elevate, for extended periods, to a "standing" position. The company hopes to introduce the **iBOT™** Mobility System this year.



For additional information about the **iGLIDE™** Manual Assist Wheelchair,

the **iBOT™** Mobility System and Independence Technology visit:

www.independencenow.com/uk

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Alternatively freephone **08000 327 326**.

 John Pinnington reports from a windy Blackpool, where MPs were fired up over fuel, social care and private healthcare

Tories stoke winter fuel debate



The Conservative Party could be on the brink of introducing a policy to extend winter fuel payments to severely disabled people under 60, according to its new disability spokesman.

Nigel Waterson MP (*left*), shadow minister for disabled people since July, told *DN*: "It could be seen on the face of it as a glaring inequality or unfairness."

"It is one of the main things I will be discussing with the Shadow Treasury team in the run-up to the manifesto (for the next General Election)."

In an interview at the confer-

ence, Mr Waterson, who has been a member of the parliamentary all-party disability group since 1992, criticised the government for delays in producing its new disability bill.

He said: "There is now a very real chance that it will not be on the statute book by the time of the next election, which is a gross dereliction by the government of a clear manifesto promise."

He also criticised the government for spending more than ten times as much on the New Deal for Young People as it is on the New Deal for Disabled People.

"I think that is unfair. Disabled people who want to get back into work are being discouraged from doing so by the system itself."

He said one of his priorities would be to convince businesses of the advantages of the new access duties under the Disability Discrimination Act.

"We started all this (by introducing the original DDA in 1995). It's important to see it through. The Conservative Party is uniquely placed to tackle the issue. We are the party not only of business, but also of disabled people."

Social care increase pledge

A Conservative government would take money out of the NHS and put it into social care, a shadow minister has told *DN*.

Tim Loughton MP, a shadow health minister and spokesman on social care, said it would be a "false economy" not to do so and called for a "rebalancing in the whole health and social care budget".

He said: "More of the £60 billion health budget should be channelled towards social care and social workers rather than

concentrating on hospitals, doctors and nurses, because it's not producing the goods there anyway."

But he pledged: "There is no way that the next Conservative government will be looking to cut back on what the current government is spending on health and social care."

Mr Loughton was speaking after a fringe event organised by the General Social Care Council and the Social Care Institute for Excellence on the future of social care.

He had told the meeting that

the number of people receiving domiciliary care had fallen by 100,000 since 1997.

And he said: "We desperately need more and better social workers with the whole profession given far more prestige."

He also called for a new recruitment campaign to attract people into social work.

He added: "None of this will work unless social services are properly funded to be able to take on these social workers, properly train them up and apply them to the job in hand."



Polling day: Andrew Crooks, a campaigns officer with Scope, tries internet voting, as part of a demonstration of the barriers faced by disabled people when trying to vote using alternative methods, such as e-voting, text messages, digital TV or by post.

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Private treatment could be part funded

People needing medical treatment, including those with long-term conditions, would be able to opt out of the NHS and take 60 per cent of the cost of their treatment with them to the private sector, under a Conservative government.

The pledge to the conference by Shadow Health Secretary Dr Liam Fox was underlined in a fringe event on long-term illnesses by health spokesman Simon Burns MP.

Mr Burns said: "Far too much emphasis is devoted to the acute side of healthcare and the actual funding of hospitals and GP practices rather than the important but often neglected area of long-term and chronic conditions."

"I believe that this is a neglect that must stop. It affects 17 and a half million people in this country."

He said the party's Patients

Passport idea would allow someone to use the standard price of their treatment to fund free care in any NHS hospital with a shorter waiting list, or take 60 per cent of the cost with them into the private sector.

But after the event, Rahana Mohammed, policy and campaigns manager for Arthritis Care, told *DN*: "This is again a choice for people who can afford it. It's not necessarily a choice for people who do not have that extra 40 per cent."

Mr Burns said less well off disabled people would still be able to use their Patients Passports to seek care elsewhere within the NHS, but he accepted: "They will not be able to go to a private hospital if they cannot find the 40 per cent."

He also criticised the government's delay in producing its national service framework for long-term conditions.

Access still 'difficult'

Blackpool has reinforced its image as the most inaccessible of the three main party conference venues.

Andrew Crooks, a campaigns officer from Scope, and a wheelchair user, said: "It was a horrific experience from the moment we arrived at the airport."

It took four men to manhandle him out of his seat on a Ryanair flight and he found his hotel inaccessible.

"Blackpool is very difficult for an independent wheelchair user," he said.

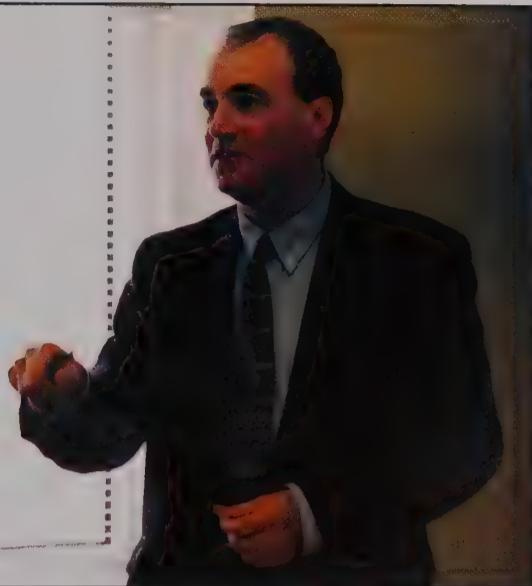
Among the problems at the main Wintergardens conference venue was a "dangerous" ramp leading to one of the lifts and an inaccessible rest room for conference exhibitors.

Jim Hattersley, chair of the Conservative Disability Group, said: "It is an old building that is difficult to rectify. At the price we pay, the building is not good."

Nuala Calvi reports from Labour's Bournemouth conference, where security caused problems for disabled delegates

Labour direct over payments

NUALA CALVI



Direct payments, which put disabled people in charge of their personal care, could become compulsory if councils continue to fail to offer them.

Stephen Ladyman, Minister for Community Care (*left*), told *DN* he was willing to "twist the arm" of local authorities if there was not a dramatic take-up of the scheme following newly released guidance to authorities.

The current system is geared to encourage people to take the cheapest possible option rather than the type of care that is best for individuals, he said.

"What we would need to

look at is a system where the council always, in 100 per cent of cases, has to give you the money and then you decide whether to buy services from the council or elsewhere.

"I don't believe there's anyone who's not capable of using direct payments with the right support. I've met people with severe learning disabilities who are managing them with the help of advocates, carers and enlightened social workers who help them express themselves.

"Legally we may need to make changes so anyone can use direct payments, but the

assumption must be that the person can use them, not that they can't."

Gerry Zarb, policy analyst at the Disability Rights Commission, said: "Obviously we think direct payments should be more widely available but I don't know how you can fit compulsion in with the concept of choice. If people still choose a service, you have to respect that choice."

"We'd expect the vast majority of people would choose direct payments. I'm just unsure about the small number that might not want to."

Job policies aren't working

Disability employment experts have warned ministers of the gap between their policies on getting disabled people into work and the reality on the ground.

At a meeting attended by work and pensions minister Andrew Smith and health minister Rosie Winterton, Tim Cooper of the Shaw Trust said there was an "issue about how close policy goals are to operational practice."

Current projects were "not resourced or able" to meet the government's goal of narrowing

the gap between the employment rate of disabled and non-disabled people, he said.

Ministers should stop continually looking for "something new" and properly support tried and tested schemes such as Access to Work.

Joanna Hindle, of Unum Provident, added: "What we're seeing with Labour is that what they're doing so far on policy is great but we aren't yet seeing delivery.

"They're on one or two out of ten for delivery.

"It takes individual case

management with each person to get that sorted and there aren't enough staff to do it."

Andrew Smith said the Pathways to Work pilots would create active local partnerships with the involvement of trade unions, primary care staff and employers working closely with Jobcentre Plus and local disability groups.

"If we can show the difference this support makes, it will be a powerful case for more resources to put into getting more disabled people into work," he said.

Eagle in *DN* snub

Labour's Minister for Disabled People failed to find time to talk to *DN* at this year's conference.

DN asked MP Maria Eagle for an interview to discuss Labour's policies for disabled people in the week before the conference.

Two years ago, charities called on the minister to make herself more available to disability organisations.

She was also too busy to talk to *DN* at the launch of the Disabled People's Parliament in Birmingham.



Heightened security causes access problems

Members of charity consortium Disability Daily have lodged a complaint with Labour's conference organisers after heightened security at this year's event caused access problems.

Police reportedly told taxis dropping disabled delegates off at the entrance to move on, while the designated drop-off point was on a busy roundabout.

Taxis picking disabled people up in the evening were not allowed to use the side road next to the conference centre.

John Knight, head of policy at Leonard Cheshire (*above right*), a Disability Daily member, was told he could not leave the security compound via the main gates after a fringe event in the evening.

He was forced to use a security exit with a turnstile and walk 100m on crutches to meet his taxi.

He told *DN*: "Access was



very good generally – it is the only conference that lends wheelchairs – and there was an access audit of the site. But there clearly wasn't enough on how the security arrangements would affect access. These were very inflexible."

Mr Knight was also unable to attend a fringe event on disability issues organised by the

Institute for Public Policy Research at the Winterbourne Hotel because the driveway was too steep.

Another delegate was reportedly unable to join a meeting on patient involvement at which health minister John Reid was due to speak, because the hotel did not have wheelchair access.

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DISNOV

Lucy Glynn reports from the Liberal Democrat conference in Brighton, where civil rights were on the agenda

'Contradictions' must end for equal rights

Disabled people's rights cannot be improved until the government scraps its "contradictory" policies, the Liberal Democrats' disability spokesperson has said.

Paul Holmes MP (right) told *DN* that the government could not achieve inclusive education while it promotes league tables, and its unhelpful policies on social housing were worsening the housing crisis for disabled people.

"The schools that are at the top of the league tables have way below the average

number of children with special educational needs. They have selected out somehow. It's absolutely disgraceful."

Holmes also cited the John Grooms report (*DN July*) which shows the chronic housing shortage for disabled people.

The Liberal Democrats agreed a motion at the conference calling for more social housing, while Holmes said Labour had "the worst" housing record for building social housing.

He criticised the government's failure to introduce a disability bill during the European Year of Disabled People, which he said had been the "perfect opportunity", and questioned whether the government would bring in new legislation before the next election as it has promised.

"Disability is too low down the agenda. That's frustrating. Disabled groups are now getting angry. They are getting fed up with waiting and are starting to feel they have been let down."

LUCY GLYNN



Charges to end

The Liberal Democrats have voted to expand the number of disabled people who are entitled to free prescriptions and to scrap all other NHS charges.

Liberal Democrat health spokesman, Dr Evan Harris MP, put forward the motion to end prescription charge anomalies.

He said thousands of people with chronic long-term conditions such as asthma, mental

health problems and multiple sclerosis do not qualify for exemption and cannot afford to pay for their treatment.

The exemption list is currently limited to people with epilepsy and diabetes.

Lord Clement-Jones, health spokesman in the Lords, added: "The system is riddled with unfairness and inconsistencies."

Access better than in 2002 – but there's still a long way to go

There have been some improvements in access at the Liberal Democrat conference but there is still a long way to go, disabled delegates have said.

Councillor David Simpson, of Hart District Council (pictured, right), who was featured in *DN*'s 2002 conference review saying access was "crap", said: "Nothing's improved. It's abysmal."

He said it "wasn't worth the hassle" to go to fringe meetings in one of the hotels as he had to get someone to open two fire doors for him.

Another wheelchair-user, Trevor Sword (pictured, left), said he had problems getting to some of the fringe venues but said the actual conference centre was "fine".



Melville Jones, who is blind, said he was "finding life extremely difficult" and had to rely on the goodwill of the public as he was having trouble finding his way around. Hannah Saul, of the Liberal Democrat Disability Association, said access to the conference was improving. "In one hotel there is a suite of rooms you can only get to by stairs. The party has listened to us. This year they have not used them."

Earning limit increase call

The Liberal Democrats have proposed a major overhaul of employment and benefits for people with learning difficulties.

East Lothian MP Jacqueline Bell put forward a policy to remove the training and employment lottery for people with mild learning difficulties.

Under the plan, the £20 a week maximum earning limit would be disregarded so people with a learning difficulty who do some paid work could still claim benefits. Some benefit forms would also be simplified.

Year of Disabled People 'could have achieved more'

The Liberal Democrats have voted to give full and equal access to disabled people to plug gaps in the Disability Discrimination Act.

In a new policy document, the party has voted to give disabled people full access to information and education as well as buildings, telecommunications, transport, public spaces and facilities.

It also outlaws incitement to hatred on grounds of disability.

The policy would give local authorities the power to act on behalf of disabled people to

ensure all public buildings and service providers are fully accessible, and strip contracts if they are not.

Liz Lynne, MEP, who is disabled, put forward the policy. She said: "We could have achieved so much more in the European Year of Disabled People."

"We still haven't got civil rights for disabled people."

"This year will be a success if the European Commission announces a disability directive which allows equal access to goods and services."

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To close *DN*'s party conference coverage, three of the smaller parties outline their policies on disability



Simone Aspis from the Green Party

The success of a society can't be measured by how much money we have as individuals or the number of paid jobs that are available.

Other factors are important, such as quality of life, personal freedom, health, happiness and human fulfilment.

These are what should be measured when determining how inclusive we are for disabled people.

The Green Party are the only political party that has adopted the social model of disability, recognising the attitudinal, organisational and environmental barriers that disabled people face.

As the European Year of Disabled People is coming to a close, Green Party English MEPs are committed to supporting a European Disability Directive which would make it a requirement for the UK to introduce fully comprehensive civil rights legislation for disabled people.

We recognise the Disability Discrimination Act is not good enough to safeguard the civil

rights of disabled people.

We are supporting the proposed Disabled People's Rights and Freedoms Bill.

Means tested benefits keep disabled people in poverty and deprive them of the same opportunities to undertake paid and unpaid work.

The Green Party would allocate every person a basic "citizen's" income, with additional payments for disability.

These allowances would be entitlements, and no penny would be lost if the disabled person chose to undertake paid work.

Direct payment schemes would be made available to all disabled people, so they could have the same level of autonomy as non disabled people.

We are also committed to installing adaptations and equipment in disabled people's homes within the recommended three months period. Communication aids would be provided and reviewed on a regular basis.

Unlike the other political parties, we would not charge disabled people for these services.

Simone Aspis, disabled people's spokesperson



Richard Coombs from Plaid Cymru



Plaid Cymru is the official opposition in the National Assembly of Wales. For many years it has been party policy to demand the removal of prescription charges for all people in Wales.

Jane Hutt, the health minister, had rejected our demand for the abolition of this charge as recently as March.

However, we passed the call unanimously, and only last

week Rhodri Morgan announced all prescription charges will be phased out.

My big speech at our conference was to propose a motion calling on the Welsh Assembly to abolish care charges, as we feel that with varying rates all over the country for basic services, this amounts to a postcode lottery of human rights.

In addition, we have started to highlight the way the Health Service in Wales seems to benefit managers. Over the past couple of years, Labour has

spent vast amounts of public money reorganising health councils, resulting in £25m being spent on management structure rather than patients.

I have also been asked to report back to council with plans for greater representation of people with disabilities as candidates for council, assembly and parliament. 18 per cent of Wales needs a louder voice.

We are moving in the right direction.

Richard Coombs, director of equality



Shona Robison from the Scottish National Party



The SNP is committed to equality.

During the recent debate in parliament on the Equal Opportunities Committee paper on mainstreaming, we made the point that we also need to get our own house in order and ensure that there are no barriers to MSPs with disabilities being elected to parliament, or staff who work in the parliament.

We believe mainstreaming is

the way forward, as equality should be everybody's business.

At our conference, there were a number of resolutions passed which have particular relevance to disabled people.

The motion on affordable housing calling for a comprehensive review of housing and an affordable housing strategy is just one example.

As part of that strategy, we need to ensure new and refurbished housing is barrier free.

In addition to this, we passed a motion reaffirming our commitment to a fully integrated tax and benefits system and for a system of taxation which is progressive, unlike the current regressive council tax.

With the advent of the Disability Discrimination Act next October, there will be a huge opportunity to use the new rights and duties to improve facilities and services provided in Scotland to everyone, regardless of disability.

Important employment rights for those with a disability will also be introduced.

Shona Robison MSP, health and social justice spokesperson

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A vote of confidence

The launch of the UK's first ever disabled people's parliament attracted high profile speakers and much media interest. Now it needs to secure a future, writes Nuala Calvi

Saturday 4 October 2003: an historic moment in the history of the disabled people's movement. The day that the first ever disabled people's parliament, or UKDPP to give it its official acronym, came into being.

Touted as a "new approach to creating change for disabled people in the UK", around 70 UKDPP members met in a hotel in Birmingham to debate the issues facing disabled people.

The new approach had certainly succeeded in fulfilling one of its organisers' stated objectives: raising the profile of disability issues. Four TV crews had gathered for the event, and high profile speakers on a *Question Time*-style panel included Minister for Disabled People Maria Eagle, Lib Dem disability spokesperson Paul Holmes, and Disability Rights Commission chair Bert Massie.

Andy Rickell, chief executive of the British Council of Disabled People (BCODP),

opened the conference, admitting the parliament has two big problems. First, it isn't really a parliament at all (it can only meet once every six months and doesn't have any money after its £50,000 European Year of Disabled People cheque runs out) and second, all the members were from BCODP and self-nominated, so the parliament isn't representative of disabled people at large.

Then again, he said, these criticisms could be fought off by looking at history. Didn't parliaments tend to start off as relatively weak bodies at the mercy of the ruling powers?

Massie's speech was rousing. Recalling Martin Luther King's

'By the end of three hours, some concrete policies had been agreed, almost all unanimously'

"I have a dream", he said the parliament was a step towards a world where disabled people are "not judged by the shape of our bodies... where barriers to



Top table: from left Maria Eagle MP, Richard Howitt MEP, Rachel Hurst and Paul Holmes MP

buildings and transport exist no longer, in which we automatically support disabled people to live in the community and don't fear being shunted into residential homes... without so much as a trial."

The speech was a reminder of the shared experiences and beliefs which united those in

It seemed to rally members into collective action. Polite questions about the promised disability bill and the European year grew into demands for an explanation of how charging for services or the Mental Incapacity Bill were compatible with human rights.

They reaped some surprising concessions from Eagle, including that the bill had "draconian elements" which the government would have to "thrash out and get right". There was also a hint that the disability bill would cover a public sector duty to actively promote disability policies.

But there was frustration from some quarters with the "experts-at-the-front" set-up.

"What are we doing, having discussions about waiting for the government to get it right for us?" Hazel Peasley asked.

"We need to be recognised as the voice of disabled people, not be patient and trusting. People's lives are being affected now!" Eagle's response was to tell them to "carry on campaigning".

As people filed out for lunch, some were annoyed that the question of the need for funding for the parliament had been raised but that the minister had not been pushed to address it.

By the second day, with TV crews and politicians gone, the room felt thinner, but this was to be the true test: would the parliamentarians be able to agree on things? In particular, the amendments to the Disabled People's Rights and Freedom's Bill, the proposed alternative to the Disability Discrimination Act.

It didn't start well. Within an hour, member Simone Aspis had resigned over the lack of information about the bill in alternative formats.

A heated debate about why more people hadn't been consulted about the bill before

the conference led for a call from BCODP's treasurer for people to refrain from verbal attacks on other delegates.

But by the end of three hours, some concrete policies had been agreed, almost all unanimously: to reject the Patient's Right to Die bill, end segregated education by 2020, seek a written UK constitution and bill of rights, support the social model, and get all information in accessible formats. The parliament would consist both of people from outside BCODP, elected by constituency area, as well as a representative from each BCODP member group.

Other issues agreed covered the right to a sex life, the right to life, the right to independent living and the right to independent advocacy.

Things were running so well people forgot time had run out for the final segment of the meeting – deciding the future of the weekend. Frantic attempts to extend the room booking were abandoned, leaving some important questions unanswered. How would members, expected to run surgeries and advocate for local disabled people, operate without rooms, phones or training? When would the parliament get a proper constitution?

Some left the weekend with the same scepticism they had arrived with, plus additional gripes about disorganisation. But they had voted for the parliament to continue, and felt it was a start.

"This will be a historic day when we look back," said Penny Bould, a member from Warwickshire.

"A parliament gives us more kudos among decision makers."

"It's new. It's an embryo. And we haven't had enough time."

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Mayor on a mission

The first thing Mike Bruton did when he became a councillor was to get a properly constructed ramp fitted to the council chamber. Now, as this year's mayor of Windsor and Maidenhead, he continues his campaigning work, both in the community and out on the hills. Nuala Calvi reports

The lack of disabled people in public life is a bone of contention for many. But to Mike Bruton, disabled mayor of the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead, anything is possible if you have self-belief.

"I don't think there are institutional barriers to public life. The neighbouring borough, Bracknell, has had a paraplegic mayor for two years. And there's David Blunkett."

The former borough head of social services, ex-director of the Disabled Drivers' Association and senior manager for British Airways, Bruton says he never encountered discrimination while building his CV.

'You've just got to show your worth and be twice as good as an able-bodied person. You've got to be excellent'

Now, as mayor, he attends a busy schedule of worthy events, which has only increased his faith in society. (Last night was a flower show, later today will be a multi-racial forum.)

He is, he says, constantly wowed by the amount of time and effort people are willing to give to their community.

"As mayor you see the reality, the good things there are to celebrate, the way people are so giving to their community."

Listening to this professional, sitting before the county silver in his mayoral chain, it's hard to believe he was once a mumble young man who thought he would amount to nothing because of his disability.

Bruton has CMT, a genetic neurological disorder which causes gradual muscle wasting. He began losing the use of his limbs at the age of six.

"I couldn't do sport and that had a severe psychological impact on me – I went to a grammar school which glorified

rugby. I became very shy and withdrawn," he remembers.

"Disability runs deeply into the subconscious. You realise you're different. It shaped me quite a bit. I had no confidence in myself and thought no-one would like me because I couldn't do what other people could do."



The rocky road to office: (left), at play with the Disabled Ramblers, and (right) at work in Maidenhead



A scholarship to Oxford and the slow, "staggering" realisation that people would accept him for who he was, changed that outlook. But he says disabled people often have to show they are twice as good as non-disabled people.

"You have to show you can achieve. If you're just average you'll be swept aside.

"You've just got to show your worth and be twice as good as an able-bodied person. You've got to be excellent," he says.

Bruton first became involved in politics when he joined the Liberal Democrats in the 1990s. In 1995 he stood as a candidate for the local council.

"Canvassing was difficult and slow on a scooter. I had to rely on my long-suffering wife, Jo, to knock on doors and shove things through letterboxes when I couldn't get into people's front gates. The next time around, I did telephone canvassing."

His election success meant staff at the town hall were forced to consider disabled access for the first time.

"The day I was elected, the property manager said he would modify access to the council chamber and proposed a short wooden ramp up two

steps. I told him to get a properly constructed ramp."

Not surprisingly, people are even more accommodating when you are mayor.

"One or two people have moved meetings so I could attend them; if you invite the mayor and he can't get in, then it's very humiliating. So people go to a lot of effort to make sure that doesn't happen."

Now he is mayor, does he feel he should use his position to promote disability issues?

"I believe in using your public role to raise these issues. It's not what every other disabled person who gets into public life does, but for me there wouldn't be any point to it otherwise." For example, he is working with an access officer on a mobile exhibition promoting schemes like Dial-a-Ride and Motability.

He is also advancing an idea to provide hire scooters in the countryside, which he regards as the "final frontier" in terms of disability access. It is a pet project of his as founder of the Disabled Ramblers.

"A lot has been done in towns and with cars. But the countryside is blocked off by things like stiles."

He has worked with the Countryside Agency to produce guidelines on access and is working with the Forestry Commission and others to provide a network of cycle routes scooter users can use.

With the government still stalling on publishing its report on how to increase the numbers of disabled people in public life, his advice is not to accept difficulties as inevitable.

"I've found that if you're determined, if you go about it the right way, you can achieve most things."

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Professionals not trusted

Thank you for publishing "I take nothing a 'professional' says on trust" (DN, September). It was long overdue and mirrored so many of my feelings regarding the interaction of "professionals" with myself and my son. He has learning difficulties and challenging behaviour.

Incidentally, why in this day and age is a lot more notice taken of what you say at meetings if you are a couple, rather than if you are a lone parent? Do other parents find this so?

I find I have to get aggressive almost to the point of rudeness before any notice is taken of what I say. Heaven help the timid parent who does not speak up.

Keep features of this calibre flowing.

Anne McKenzie
King's Heath
Birmingham

Alert cards welcomed

I welcome the idea that the Government should introduce care cards to alert doctors to people's conditions and their side effects (DN, September), and hope that they will be used in midwifery.

During my first pregnancy, I developed a condition "divarication of the rectus", which only seems to be mentioned in heavy medical books. Our older boy was fine, but the condition meant that subsequent babies were at risk of malpresentation and could need a caesarean delivery.

Asda beats the other supermarkets to it

I see in your bright ideas section (DN, September) you credit Sainsbury's with introducing a new rotating trolley for wheelchairs. We launched the trolley at the Mobility Roadshow in June.

Philip Davies
Customer Service Project Mgr
Asda, Leeds
Sainsbury's made the claim in a press release. A press officer

At eight months, the consultant discovered the baby was lying sideways and a caesarean was inevitable. We did not question the doctor's decision not to examine me fully or the nurse's to disconnect the heart monitor, only the delay. An alert card might have caused the doctor and nurse to question their actions and protected our second son from suffering massive brain damage whilst he was unmonitored.

Mary Warburton
Dibden Purlieu, Hampshire

Once bitten, twice shy

It is sad the DN Travel Club has had to be abandoned due to lack of take-up.

It left me wondering whether there are many disabled people

Transport for London let me down

Seeing the advertisement in August DN, I planned to take our foster child to Trafalgar Square for the Liberty festival on Sunday 7 September.

I contacted the phone numbers in DN. The first was a machine telling me that the office was closed.

I contacted Transport for London as I wanted to know if there were parking spaces for wheelchair guests. The person had no idea of parking availability, so I asked about going on public transport.

I was told to get the 82 to Marble Arch. I told the man I could not chop and change with a profoundly disabled child. Eventually he went through all the buses going to the square and finally informed me that he was sorry but by next year I could get a wheelchair bus.

One of the sponsors for the event was Transport for London. I feel it is a gross lack of care to organise an event of this sort and for me to be told that there are no suitable buses for me to use.

Judy Goldsmith (email)

who, like me, would love to use this service, but from bitter experience are reluctant to put their trust in claims made by holiday companies, even specialist ones.

Marilyn Spicer (email)

Teen spirit



by Eleni Burgess

It's been a great month for me. I published my report on inclusion in mainstream education, *Are We Nearly There Yet?* I also moved on to Stockport College where I am doing a BTEC in sport science, having left school after the dreaded GCSEs.

It's been great to find a college where the staff appeared not to notice the wheelchair when they met me to discuss enrolment.

Rachel Potter, the Paralympic athlete, has just completed a degree in sport science at the college so of course they knew that wheelchair users can fly, never mind hold their own in a group of able-bodied athletes.

This contrasted with another college that implied I would never cope or fit in because I could not play football!

It seems amazing that such attitudes are still around but then there is very little attention paid to disability sport in the media and a complete lack of any reference to disabled people in textbooks.

My college course has one main, recommended text book, published this year by Hodder and Stoughton. In all 477 pages on BTEC sport science the three authors have not made one reference to disability.

There are whole sections on the effects of gender and race but nothing on disability.

Every Olympic games is described but the Paralympics apparently never took place.

Would the editor have published this book if the authors had excluded any reference to the achievements of black athletes?

One of the main findings of my report was that disabled teenagers saw no disabled role models in textbooks and are tired of being excluded.

One day I hope to discover that I am no longer invisible. (See Eleni's report on page 3)

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What was new at this year's Independent Living Exhibition? DN's experts produce a three page report

Home improvements

A safe shower, a clever use of bed rails and a protective hipshield were among the items discovered by Sue Heaton



absorbing material over the hipbone, and was designed originally for motorbike users. It slips into a pocket within the special pants and is unobtrusive unless you choose to wear skin-tight trousers! £45.53, including pants. Tel: 01302 788684.

Another item that caught my eye at the show was the Step Lift with Bridge by Wessex (left). This is a relatively low cost option to give wheelchair users easier access where a short flight of steps are involved. Installation costs can be kept to a minimum as steps do not have to be removed and a pit does not always have to be dug for the lift base. From £5,400, including installation. Tel: 01794 830303.

Stannah were also showing their new Model 310 (above), which is an outdoor stair lift for straight stairs that can be used in temperatures between 10 and 40 degrees centigrade. A little restrictive in our winter perhaps, and careful thought would have to be given to possible vandalism in an open situation. From £4,000, including fitting. Tel: 01264 332244.

Moving on to the bathroom,



I spotted a really easy to use electric shower, the Redring Selectronic from Applied Energy (above). It can be pre-programmed to provide hot water at a comfortable and safe 40 degrees centigrade. In this mode no temperature change is possible, even accidentally. You press one large button to start the shower and the same button to stop it. Cost varies, so contact Applied Energy, tel: 01733 456789 for your nearest stockist.

Eurocare manufacture the Jubilee Bath, which has addressed some common problems. The door opens inwards to 90 degrees to allow easier access; it is ideal as a standard bath replacement; they have got the step as low as they can, and the door handle seemed easy to operate. Cost varies. Tel: 01302 788684.

Sure Stop had a small stand showing its Direct Water Switch, a useful idea for everyone. It switches the mains water off and can be sited to suit the householder. There is no maintenance, and the water stops flowing at the flick of a switch so you can turn water off easily at night or when going on holiday. £29.95. Tel: 0121 782 5666.

At the Manchester Disabled Living Centre we regularly get queries about baths with doors, so much so that we have produced a free leaflet called Wisebuy 2-Dip into this Leaflet. Tel: 0161 214 5959 for more information.

With the problems documented recently about bed safety rails, I was interested to see that Bakare have produced a different solution. They have produced a bed with Klearside Bed Safety Rails. The rails are higher than usual but the space between the horizontal bar and the bed base is filled by high strength PVC giving a



Sue Heaton demonstrates one-handed cooking utensils



All set: DN's Elizabeth Cowley (left) and Juliana Udueze

transparent window which allows the person in bed to see out clearly. Hopefully some users would no longer feel enclosed or trapped in the bed, because they could see the ceiling. £1,395. Tel: 01752 512222.

Finally, I was pleased to see a number of charity and useful information stands this year. These included the Department of Health who have a really interesting free book called *A Practical Guide to Disabled People or Carers*. For a copy tel:

08701 555 455. Ricability has produced a new booklet, *Wheels on Wheels*, which is a guide to using a wheelchair on public transport. 56p, tel: 0207 427 2460. And Canine Partners were telling people how they provide highly trained assistance dogs to enable people to live more independently and enjoy an enhanced lifestyle. Tel: 08456 580480 for more information.

Sue Heaton is an occupational therapist at the Manchester Disabled Living Foundation.



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About three years ago my mother-in-law fell and broke her hip at the age of 88. She has recovered well but her mobility is now so restricted compared to before the fall. Her life has changed from one of independence to dependence on social services and family. I doubt she would have been prepared to wear a Hipshield before her fall, but it may have prevented her from the restricted mobility she now has.

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Get mobile

Sue Clements was lured to the scooters, but she found other things too, including funny car stickers



Mobility trials: left D Simani from London in the MVS Scooter with roof; above Robin Coles in the Adventure and below Jenny Conran-Jones from Preston on the TGA Breeze scooter

There was a quite a buzz at the Independent Living exhibition last month and a lot of products to see and test.

The sudden change from high temperatures to more autumnal ones drew my attention to scooters which had protection from the elements. A striking example was the Classic plus, a four-wheeled, lidded scooter for road and off-road use. Imported from Switzerland by M.V.S. a company new to this market, it would certainly need

space for housing and parking. A visitor on the stand from North London was interested in taking it to her local woods, but concerned about parking it. £8,000, tel: 0800 3283104.

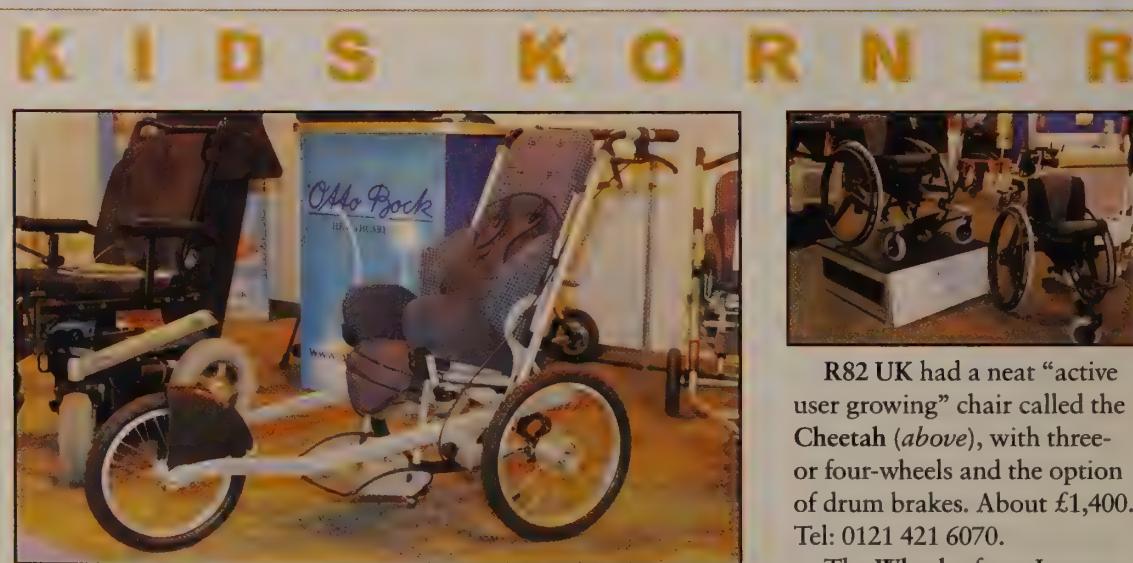
Another interesting roofed scooter was the TGA Breeze (see also page 47).

The Mini Crosser from EV Technology comes as a three- or four-wheel outdoor scooter with an optional weather-proof cabin and there's also a hook-on trailer. From £4,395. Tel:

01455 554242.

Pride Mobility's Go go is a small, compact three- or four-wheel scooter which dismantles easily and has a tiller that folds down. A lady from south east London was wondering how it would fit into the boot of her Corsa which has a lip at the edge. She wanted a second scooter. £1,350-£1,450. Tel: 01869 233100.

The Adventure is a brand new chair designed in Germany and retailed here by Gerald



On the mobility front, Otto Bock were showing an attachment that links up the Kimba pushchair (see above)

to a bicycle so the child can be pulled along behind "rickshaw style". It costs £8,909 plus £600. Tel: 01784 744900.



R82 UK had a neat "active user growing" chair called the Cheetah (above), with three- or four-wheels and the option of drum brakes. About £1,400. Tel: 0121 421 6070.

The Wheeler from Invacare is a "tilt-in-space recliner" (above right) for children with comfort seating that can be covered with an eye



Simonds. Robin Coles from Bromley who tried it out was very impressed with the smooth ride and engineering. New ideas include motors being part of the wheels, so if one breaks down only the wheel needs to be sent back for repair. The Adventure also dismantles cleverly and can be jacked up to remove the wheels. An all terrain chair, it has even been up to the top of a mountain. From £5,995. Tel: 01296 380 200.

Two special purpose chairs on the Gerald Simonds stand were imported from Canada. The Eclipse can take a weight of up to 72 stone (£1,895) and the Stella has a spring loaded back and stabilising feet for someone who rocks backwards and forwards. No price yet.

Cyclone had some French "stand up wheelchairs" called Lifestand. They are good looking, well designed and easy to operate. A visitor to the stand, a picture framer who has paraplegia, was interested in the manual version (£3,295) for his work because it would allow him to use a machine he now has to use from a sitting position. The semi-electric version costs £4,395 and the fully motorised one £8,495. Tel: 0151 346 2310.

From the large to the small. The O'Connor Group, specialists in car stickers, had a mixture of serious and funny



catching teddy bear fabric – very child friendly. From £1,495. Tel: 01656 647327.

Pride Mobility had a new children's power chair, the Quantum Dynamo, which uses the same mid-wheel drive



Standing straight: Martin King from Weston-super-Mare tries the Cyclone Lifestand. Top left, Pride Mobility's Go go

stickers for windscreens at various prices. Tel: 0191 565 5559. There was a wide range of wheelchair gloves, fur cushions and other accessories on the GLCC stand, tel: 01633 216644. And a company called Biz-spoke showed bespoke spoke guards made to individual designs, tel: 01268 561900.

Mangar International were launching the Handy Slider, a contoured transfer board on two legs that could make transferring to and from a car easier. It will assist with sliding across the seat and can be folded up after use. £95. Tel: 01544 267674.

The Spinal Injuries Association has produced a new wheelchair skills video which will help people learn new skills or refresh their old ones. It shows how to get the most out of your chair in different situations, such as supermarket shopping and

going up hills. £19 plus postage and packing, tel: 0800 980 0501.

The British Healthcare Trades Association were promoting their registration scheme and Code of Good Practice. If a company is registered it will mean that it signs up to standards which will help protect the consumer from unethical selling practices. Tel: 01732 458868.

Overall, it was a lively show and several people commented on the helpful stand personnel. My colleague who is visually impaired thought that the guide maps could have been clearer, but the stand signage had improved. It was a pity there was no test track for larger vehicles given the number of people attending – over 5,000, according to the organisers.

Sue Clements is senior advisor at the Disabled Living Foundation.

design as the Jazzy, a popular adult chair. This gives it a very tight turning circle and the suspension gives the user a smooth ride. From £2,999. Tel: 01869 233100.

On a safety note, Safespaces were one of the few children's companies represented at Independent Living. They were displaying their Safespace System (*above right*) and Cosyfit Sleepsystem. The latter is custom built to fit around a Safespace mattress or your own bed. Being freestanding it provides an attractive fully padded environment. From £1,600. They also make floor mats, cushions and padded



wall panels from £65. Tel: 01706 816274.

If you would like to see more children's equipment then do visit Kidz Up North at the Reebok Stadium in Bolton on 13 November. Tel: 0161 214 5959 for more information.

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Dr. Siaron West of Cardiff. Her husband Pete has MS



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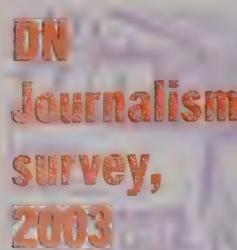
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A vital first step in changing attitudes to disability is to give more media space to disabled journalists, but as *DN*



| Number of disabled students who have applied for journalism courses over the last three years (number / percentage of total) | How many of these disabled students have been accepted onto a course in the last three years? (number / percentage of total) | How many of them completed the course? | Are your buildings accessible for people with mobility problems? | i] Do you offer specific study support to disabled students such as extra time in exams, IT help, readers and support workers? | | Do your courses cover the reporting of disability issues? | Do you have any incentives/strategies in place to attract disabled students? |
|--|--|--|--|--|---|---|--|
| | | | | ii] Can you be flexible if students need time off for health or disability related reasons? | | | |
| Bournemouth University, Poole | — | "Many dyslexic students" | — | Yes, and DDA improvement plan underway | i Yes ii Yes | — | — |
| University of Brighton | 1 / 1% (first year of course) | 0 | n/a | Yes | i Yes ii Yes | Yes | No. "Not yet" |
| Camborne Pool Redruth College | 0 | 0 | 0 | Yes | i Yes ii Yes | Students encouraged to write stories on disability | Equal opportunities policy encourages all |
| University of Central England, Birmingham | "Very few" | "Very few" | n/a | Yes | i Yes ii "No, not very, because the broadcast journalism course is an intensive 25 weeks." | Partially, discuss ethics, language and NUJ code | No, but mention bursaries in interviews |
| City University, London | 2 or 3 a year | New data system not ready yet | n/a | Access key issue in current refurbishment | i Yes ii Yes | Issues arise and has own media BSL course | Advertise Leach Bursary on website and fliers |
| Coleg Gwent | 1 | 0 | 0 | Access action plan has been developed | i Yes ii Yes | — | No |
| Cumbria Institute of the Arts, Carlisle | 12 / approx 10% | 5 / 12 % | 2 of 2 finished degree so far | "Reasonably", with improvements planned | i Yes ii Yes | "We are planning to do so" | Disabled students access project in place |
| Darlington College | — | "None accepted this year" | — | Yes | i Yes ii Yes | Yes | College committed to widening participation |
| De Montfort University, Leicester | 6 / 2% | 10 / 13% | Only one has withdrawn so far | Yes | i Yes ii Yes, although there "are limits" because course is "highly intensive" | Yes, particularly mental health | Yes. Committed to access to "non-typical" students |
| Edge Hill College of Higher Education, Lancs | — | 5 / 4% (over two years) | All still on course | Yes | i Yes ii Yes | Covers "equality and equal opportunities" issues | No, although has equal opportunities policy |
| Falmouth College of Arts | 21 / 6.5% | 10 | All completed. 1 failed exams | Yes | i Yes, includes screening first year undergrads for dyslexia ii Yes, within certain time limits | No | College has a "widening participation" officer |
| Harlow College | 10 / approx. 0.5% | 3 or 4 / approx. 1% | Approx. 3 or 4 | Yes | i Yes ii Yes, although fast-track is harder to arrange | Courses cover "everything" | No |
| Harrow College, Harrow | 4 / less than 1% | 4 / less than 1% | 2 | Yes | i Yes ii Yes | Yes | No |
| Lambeth College, South London | — | Approx. 10 / 5% | All completed course | Yes | i Yes ii Yes | Yes, particularly mental health issues | College-wide strategy to attract disabled students |
| University of Leeds, Inst. of Comm. Studies | Less than one per year | 2 / 2% | 4 of 6 completed course | Some buildings "not negotiable" in wheelchair | i Yes ii Yes | Yes | No, although university does |
| London College of Printing / London Institute | 97 / 2.6%* | 21 / 4.7%* | 17, 5%* | Yes | i Yes ii Yes, "in certain circumstances" | Yes | No, although has equal opportunities policy |
| NoSweat Journalism Training, London | 3 / percentages are "sensitive" | 3 | 1 of 1 | Not yet, but are moving to accommodate this | i "Have not had the need, but we are flexible" ii Yes | No | No |
| University of Salford | 1 | 1 | 0 | Access improving all the time | i Yes ii Yes | Yes, "very much so" | Prospectus contains disability statement |
| University of Sheffield | — | — | — | Some departments and services are inaccessible | i Yes ii Yes | No | No |
| Sheffield Hallam University | 0 | 0 | 0 | Yes | i Yes ii Yes | Yes | No |
| Southampton Institute | 27 / 2.4% | 7 / approx 2% | 9 of 12 completed course | Yes | i Yes ii Yes | Yes | "Strongly welcomes" disabled applicants |
| Staffordshire University, Stoke-on-Trent | 28 / 5.4% | — | — | Yes | i Yes ii Yes | Yes | Proactive and scholarship for Staffs students |
| Univ of Strathclyde/ Glasgow Caledonian | 0 | 0 | 0 | Yes, although campus as a whole is on steep hill | i Yes ii Yes | Yes | Bursary for disabled students but no applicants |
| Surrey Institute of Art and Design Univ College | 24 / 5.5% (over 2 years) | 15 / 15.8% (over 2 years) | 100% pass rate | All facilities should be accessible by 5 Sept | i Yes ii Yes, "to a certain extent" | Yes. Uses Scope's disability reporting guide | Link with a physical and sensory support service |
| Trinity and All Saints College, Leeds | — | n/a | n/a | Yes | i Yes ii Yes | No | No |
| Warwickshire College, Leamington Spa | — | 3 (all with dyslexia) | 3 | Yes | i Yes ii Yes | No | No |
| West Kent College, Tonbridge | 3 / 15% (first year of course) | 3 / 25% | n/a | Yes | i Yes ii Yes | "We plan to look at this" | No |
| University of Wolverhampton | 2 / 2% (2003 intake) | 5 / 8.5% (over 2 years) | — | "Committed to creating accessible environment" | i Yes ii Yes | Yes | Won government cash to support disabled students |
| COLLEGES/UNIVERSITIES THAT DECLINED TO TAKE PART IN SURVEY: | Cardonald College, Glasgow University of Central Lancashire, Preston City College Brighton & Hove Crawley College East Surrey College, Redhill | Highbury College, Portsmouth Liverpool Community College University of London, Goldsmiths College Nottingham Trent University | Sheffield College University of Sunderland Sutton Coldfield College University of Ulster, Co Londonderry University of Westminster | — Dash denotes that figures were unavailable * Includes further education level courses | | | |

launches a pioneering journalism campaign, John Pring discovers that the problems begin in higher education

Not making the news

Not a single disabled person has applied to Camborne College's journalism course in the last three years.

And not one disabled person has applied to join the University of Strathclyde's postgraduate journalism course in three years. Or the course at Sheffield Hallam University.

Although a handful of courses have reported representative percentages of disabled students, they remain very much in the minority.

Many of the few students who do somehow find their way onto journalism courses have mental health problems or dyslexia, while students with mobility and sensory impairments appear to be extremely thin on the ground.

In June, *Disability Now* began a survey of UK colleges and universities that provide journalism courses accredited by either the National Council for the Training of Journalists (NCTJ) or the Broadcast Journalism Training Council (BJTC).

We wanted to discover why there are so few disabled journalism students and journalists. We believe this is the first ever UK survey to ask how many disabled people are applying to study journalism.

Jeremy Dear, general secretary of the National Union of Journalists, backed the survey, and said he would like to see colleges increase the numbers of disabled students in the same way that they had "dramatically" increased the numbers of black students.

He said: "You could go to a hundred newsrooms in the country and do a survey and not find a single disabled journalist working there, which has got to be a concern for the whole industry."

The survey was also backed by Joanne Butcher, the new

chief executive of the NCTJ, who is spearheading a more "proactive" approach to increasing diversity.

She said the numbers of disabled people on journalism courses was "unacceptable". "We are an industry that is white and middle class, and that is a problem for us."

Butcher and Dear both called for the use of disabled role models to attract more disabled people into the industry.

During the seven years Jim Latham was course leader at the University of Westminster, he can remember coming across only one disabled student.

Latham, secretary of the BJTC, also believes more should be done to attract disabled people into journalism and says there is a serious shortage of research on the issue.

He believes the problem in radio and television journalism is partly the lack of aids to help disabled students use cameras and other broadcasting equipment, and partly the discriminatory attitudes among some of the smaller, more commercial radio stations who are less committed to equality.

DN reporter Lucy Glynn, who has cystic fibrosis, didn't tell her journalism tutors that she was disabled, because they had warned students not to take time off due to the "intensive" nature of the course.

"I was really worried and stressed the whole time because I thought, if I get ill, what am I going to do?" she says. "It seemed I had really picked the wrong industry to go into."

In the last three years, Camborne College has not received a single application from a disabled person for its "fast-track" NCTJ course, even though the college and course seem to boast accessible facilities and good levels of support for disabled students.

'You could go to a hundred newsrooms and not find a single disabled journalist working there'

— Jeremy Dear, general secretary, National Union of Journalists



STEFANO CAGNONI

'We are an industry that is white and middle class. That is a problem for us'

— Joanne Butcher, chief executive, National Council for the Training of Journalists



NIALA CALVI

Making notes, but no headway: Disabled journalists are judged on disability first, reporting ability second

Helen Ward, from Camborne College, believes disabled people are not being encouraged to think of journalism as a potential career. "The employers just do not want the hassle and we have to get over to them that it is not a hassle."

One of the survey findings is that the smaller, more "personal" courses and colleges tend to attract more disabled students. According to Jackie Errigo, of Cumbria Institute of the Arts, this is because disabled students feel they will "get what is promised".

West Kent College, for example, has three disabled students out of 12 in the first intake for its new one year NCTJ course.

Alison Moore, course leader in journalism at West Kent, believes her course has attracted disabled applicants because it offers excellent support, for instance to people with dyslexia.

But she says she has worked with "hundreds" of journalists during her career and "really can't think of one who I would classify as disabled".

She, too, says there is a need for "positive role models", like the BBC's Peter White, and for courses to be more obvious in stating that they "treat people with disabilities equally".

De Montfort University in Leicester has accepted 10 disabled people in the last three years, from a total of 75 students, onto its one-year, post-graduate course. Five of those revealed their mental health problems during the course.

Ali Haynes, journalism subject leader at De Montfort,

believes these figures are partly because her students pay higher fees in exchange for "personal, individual attention".

But whatever the problems with journalism courses, they are exaggerated once disabled students try to find jobs.

Lucy Howard, *DN*'s editorial assistant, who has a hearing impairment, didn't mention to potential employers that she was disabled. "Because it is so competitive anyway, I thought if

I mentioned I had a disability as well, I would definitely go on the 'no' pile," she says.

Haynes says the industry is "not a warm, supportive environment" and there needs to be a "fundamental cultural shift" in the media's attitude.

Errigo agrees. "I think the focus needs to be on the receiving end (the employers). Judge this person as a journalist, not as a person with a disability."

Disability Now's comprehensive holiday coverage begins in the January 2004 issue

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Final booking deadline: 2nd December 2003.

Rewards on the wards

At the age of nine, Victoria Eathorne was involved in a car accident that left her in a coma. When she regained consciousness, she had to learn how to walk and use her memory again. Her experiences in rehabilitation convinced her to work in the care industry. After two years as a care assistant, she started training as a nurse.

While I was training, I had to work harder than the other nurses because of my poor memory.

I worked full time on the wards at the Royal Cornwall Hospital NHS Trust while studying as well. It was difficult: in a stressful environment, my responses are not as quick as other nurses.

But I was determined to succeed and after three years training, I passed my exams first time to qualify as a registered nurse in 1990.

After I qualified, I worked on a variety of different wards at the Royal Cornwall, but the pace of the profession was increasing and so the demands on nurses were increasing, too.

You are often expected to be able to do ten things at once as a nurse and that was really difficult for me.

I worked in a busy ward environment for ten years and was perhaps a bit slower than the other nurses, and I did find

it stressful.

I had to work harder to make up for it but maybe sometimes I couldn't always think of ten things at once.

The trust tried to help me by putting me in different wards to try to find a niche in which I felt comfortable, but it became increasingly difficult to cope.

I was fortunate, though, to be able to obtain professional advice and support from Sue Matthews, the south-west regional officer for the Royal College of Nursing (RCN).

She helped me by attending meetings with me and arguing my case. Then three years ago, in February 2000, Cornwall

We are now a mental health and learning disability trust so we often deal with patients with a double disadvantage. Some have multiple disabilities.

Even though I no longer work on the wards, I am still a registered nurse and the nursing knowledge and skills I gained are invaluable.

I am currently working on producing a strategy for the trust to address the needs of patients who are disabled and who access our services.

I have also had 13 articles published on disability issues and developed a strategy on how the trust should respond to the Disability Discrimination

'A nurse's skills are extremely valuable and it is such a loss to the NHS if they have to leave the profession'

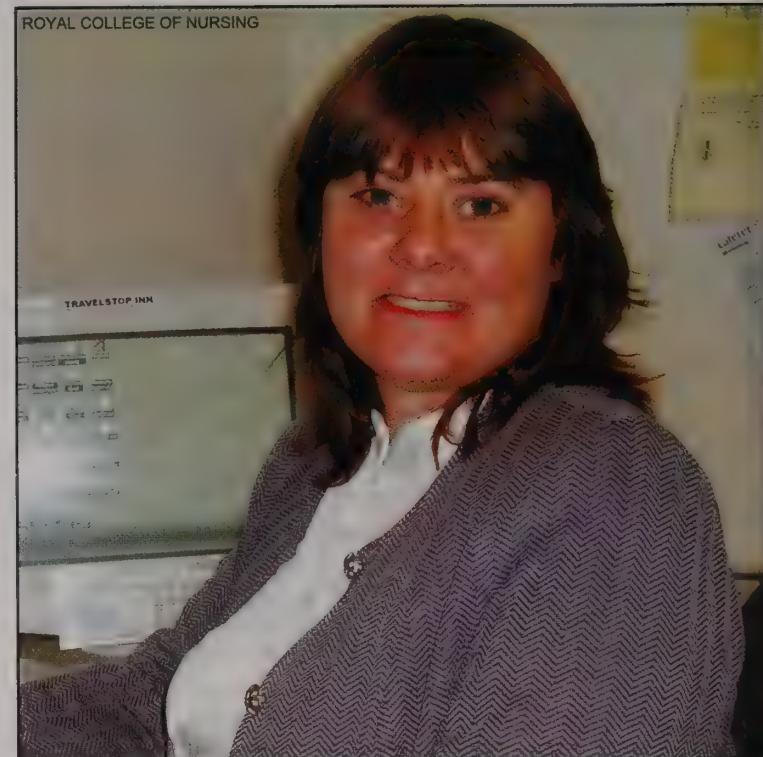
Partnership NHS Trust (formerly the Royal Cornwall) decided to appoint me to the post of disability adviser.

Here, my role is to improve services for disabled people.

Act (DDA).

Another one of my roles is as a learning representative for the RCN. A colleague and I have produced a workbook on the DDA and how the union should

ROYAL COLLEGE OF NURSING



deal with disabled nurses.

This workbook is being rolled out across the UK and I will also be delivering the workshop for RCN representatives that will support the workbook.

There are a lot of disabled nurses in the NHS. Some have arthritis; some have back problems; many of them have been injured at work.

The RCN has a Work Injured Nurses Group and that can be very useful in offering advice and support. With the right support, disabled nurses can succeed in the NHS.

I think it is a question of

educating managers to look at nurses' abilities. A nurse's skills are extremely valuable and it is such a loss to the NHS if they have to leave the profession.

But the support available to disabled nurses improves all the time – it is ten times better than it was a decade ago.

Having said that, there is still much work to be done to ensure they are given the support they need to do their job.
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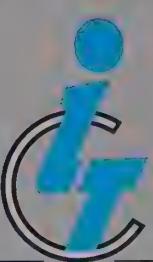


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TV

Never could get my head round boxing, never mind "white collar boxing" or "ultimate fighting" as demonstrated by Mat "sealboy" Fraser in C4's *Unarmed and Dangerous*. Caged fighting or mixed martial arts is really legalised street fighting, but Mat Fraser is a talented actor (and has a great narrating voice) so what does he have to prove? His girlfriend asked the same question.

If you had insulin dependent diabetes, would you go on a *Thelma and Louise* style road trip without your insulin? That was what Gladys (*EastEnders*' Dot Cotton/June Brown) did in the ridiculous/hilarious ITV1 comedy drama *Margery and Gladys*. Penelope Keith (Margery in full Margot mode) held up a post office with an insulin loaded syringe masquerading as "deadly spores". As I say, ridiculous.

Anyone seeing BBC1's *One Life: Size Doesn't Matter* would be moved by Caroline Miller's story.

28-years-old and the only dwarf in Jersey, she gamely took herself off to meet 200 others at the World Dwarf Games and travelled to America to a huge dwarf convention, looking for love. Her honesty touched a nerve with anyone who is "different".

Good to see actress/comic Francesca Martinez (who has CP) on ITV1's *The Frank Skinner Show* – shame we had to sit through the charmless Jordan first.

Spinally injured people seeing BBC1's *Six o'Clock News* may have seethed at their reporting of Gemma Quinn, paralysed 11 years ago in a car crash. Following treatment in London, Gemma has spurned her wheelchair by harnessing the power of her mind. Good for her. So all spinally injured people just need to get a grip. If only it was that simple.

I noticed Julie Fernandez (disabled star of BBC comedy *The Office*) bellyaching over a non-disabled actress being cast for the execrable BBC1 "comedy" *Eyes Down* (DN October). Just think yourself lucky to have escaped it!

Jane Shepherd

excellent
 very good
 good
 OK
 poor

Festival



Above and Beyond

Above and Beyond has been the largest arts event in the European Year of Disabled People, a festival and conference dedicated to the proposition that "the culture of disability – its art, its aesthetic and what it has to say – transcends national boundaries". As conference poet, I found myself responding to a great deal of high quality work.

Sidiki Conde opened the show with his terrific drumming and Guinean dance steps, which he performs on his hands. Next up, Interact Theatre Company, an integrated group from Minneapolis, presented *Madame Josette's Nothing Sacred Cabaret*, a fast



THE GLOUCESTERSHIRE ECHO

and lively piece of music/theatre/storytelling.

The biggest hit of the festival was David Roche, with *The Church of 80% Sincerity*, a one-man show aimed at a mainstream audience about living with facial disfigurement (above). It was funny, intelligent and perceptive, with some devastating insights.

Canadian Victoria Maxwell performed *Crazy for Life*, her play about bipolar disorder,

another very professional piece. I enjoyed it, although a survivor I talked to was disappointed the account of personal experience did not develop into a wider critique of the Canadian psychiatric system.

Some acts got a little lost in the large auditorium. Not so the brilliant Caroline Parker, the disreputable – and very funny – Nasty Girls, or the excellent Signdance Collective. Julie McNamara and Mat

Fraser were an inspired pairing as hosts.

Away from the main stages, deaf artist Cathy Woolley gave an impressive presentation describing *Deaf Arts Escape*, a residential week in the Lake District, and Tony Heaton presented an organisation profile of the work being done at Holton Lee in Dorset, including the opening of Faith House.

In a side room, Liz Crow's experimental film *Rapture*, commissioned for the festival, played continuously, with sign interpretation on a second screen. The film presented Disability Arts as a parcel being unwrapped, layer by layer, "a haiku of the mystery, exuberance, and discovery that is Disability Arts".

Like the festival itself, it was full of surprises.

Allan Sutherland

Film



Seabiscuit

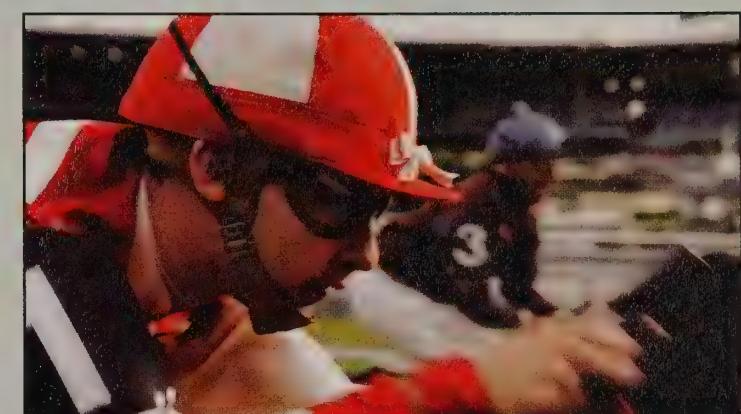


Seabiscuit is the story of the great American racehorse of the 1930s, and the trio of outsiders who created his success: owner Charles Howard (Beau Bridges), trainer Tom Smith (Chris Cooper) and visually-impaired jockey Johnny "Red" Pollard (Tobey Maguire, pictured right).

Seabiscuit was a small, ungainly horse that had been

passed over until these three demonstrated to Depression-era America that being written off didn't make you a loser – which was a message that millions of Americans needed to hear. As the New Deal started to take hold, Seabiscuit became a symbol for America. (The historical point is made directly, with sections of documentary voice-over narration.)

The racing sequences are superb. I tend to feel that if you've seen one horse race, you've seen them all, but these are absolutely gripping, partly due to the device of providing a Greek chorus in the form of



radio journalist "Tick-Tock" McGlaughlin, played with manic glee by William H Macy.

This is a tremendous film, with enthralling characters, scrupulous historical detail and

a plot that just belts along. Like a modern Frank Capra movie, it's a warm, funny and emotional piece of storytelling filled full of optimism. Don't miss it.

Allan Sutherland

Coming up



Lies and Videotape exhibition. 22 November, £35 concessions, tel: 0151 702 7400, www.tate.org.uk/liverpool

Art Works in Mental Health runs at the Royal College of Art until 16 November before touring nationwide. The exhibition features works from artists who have experienced mental health problems, including *Unnamed Highstreet* by Laura Nelson (see above).

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Mum's the word

Six years ago, Rachel Wilson wrote in *DN* about the challenges she faced as a disabled mum. Now, with Rebecca and Charlie growing up fast, Rachel writes about the changing trials – and the continued rewards

Mummy, is this the right foot?" "Nearly," I say, and watch Charlie give an exasperated sigh as he forces his shoes on to the wrong feet. Rebecca clatters about with a lunchbox in the kitchen.

Such is the rhythm of our weekday lives, punctuated by occasional hunts for homework, reading books and hairbrushes.

Both the children – Rebecca, eight, and Charlie, nearly four – have reached milestones this year.

Charlie has started in the nursery class at infants school, while Rebecca has started at junior school, an event she has been talking about for the last 18 months!

'I have discovered that it is possible to do the Hokey Cokey from a chair and hold the hands of two children at the same time'

In common with most parents with young children, our lives are hectic. But the additional challenges I face as a wheelchair user have inevitably changed as the children have got older.

When Charlie was a baby, the challenge was essentially one of balancing the intense physical demands of a young baby and those of a little girl just starting school. Now that they are older, they are more focused around issues of equal access for us all.

I work hard to ensure the children should not be disadvantaged by my being a wheelchair user, especially with access to school. It is very

important to me that I should be able to attend concerts and parents' evenings.

The head teacher at the infant school has always been extremely supportive, while not making an "issue" of the fact that I am a wheelchair user.

It is ironic that the closest I have come to a disagreement with the head teacher was when she reassigned Rebecca's class for the new school year, because I couldn't get into the one that Rebecca was originally put into.

I felt that if there was a conflict between my access requirements and Rebecca's education, Rebecca's needs were paramount, whereas she said that in mixed ability classes it

didn't matter which teacher she had, so had moved Rebecca to an accessible classroom.

I have always been encouraged to get involved with the school. I currently read with Year 2 children once a week and also work with the nursery children.

The children are very enthusiastic about my presence and our reading is usually interrupted with questions about the workings of my chair, or why I can't stand up.

For their part, the nursery children tend to queue up to "press my buttons" and I have discovered that it is possible to do the Hokey Cokey from a

chair and hold the hands of two children at the same time!

I was especially touched when, during a round of Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes in the nursery recently, Charlie touched my toes for me because I couldn't reach!

Being involved with the children in school has convinced me more than ever of the value of integration.

The children are accepting and naturally curious and the nursery teacher has said that my being in the classroom has even taught the kids the importance of picking things up.

Our experience with the infant school was so positive that I was anxious about how things would be at the junior school.

At the open evening for new parents, there was some low-level panic by a few of the staff at the sight of a wheelchair user, and the deputy head introduced himself to me by talking about "the things they could have done with the money" that they had spent on a ramp.

But Rebecca says she loves the school and the staff are getting used to seeing me around.

This does not mean there aren't frustrations about parenting as a wheelchair user.

The biggest current frustration is Charlie's determination to take full advantage of the fact that there are certain places mummy can't reach. The tiny space behind the sofa takes on a particular appeal



Then and now: (Above) Rachel with Rebecca and Charlie and right, playing together three years ago



around bedtime, as does the space underneath the dining table when it's time to get to school.

I used to get very frustrated at the feeling of being held to ransom by a small boy, especially as Rebecca never showed such tendencies.

But as Charlie loves an audience and sweets, the combination of walking away with an air of practised indifference and the denial of sweets does the trick.

Recently, when I wandered off during a performance, he came to find me after five minutes, gave me a hug and said: "Did you forget where I was?"

I have learnt to allow time for this when we're getting ready and I'm confident that he won't still be doing it at 16.

I am fortunate to have happy, confident children and I have learnt that in the most important respects our lives are very ordinary.

Long may it continue.

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On yer bike!



DN's man in the saddle, Allan Sutherland, reports from Cycle 2003, where despite a disappointing number of tricycles on show, there were enough new two-wheel models to keep cyclists happy

The European Year of Disabled People hasn't had a big effect on the cycle trade, at least to judge by Cycle 2003, which was significantly more mainstream than last year's show.

Companies such as Powabyke, London Recumbents and even Pashley, all of which exhibited last year, were not present this time round. As a result, there wasn't a single conventional tricycle on show.

There were, however, a few recumbent trikes. Though comfortable to ride, these tend to hug the ground and are therefore less practical for elderly riders or others with reduced mobility. Advanced Vehicle Design (AVD) were showing the latest version of the Windcheetah.

Generally reckoned to be the best recumbent trike on the market, this was never a cheap option (it costs from £1,950 plus VAT), but it is a lovely machine to ride.

It also has one major special needs application. Because it uses joystick control, the Windcheetah is particularly suitable for a one-armed rider. It is also, like all trikes, much more stable than a two-wheeler. AVD will include relevant modifications in the price of the machine for no extra charge.

www.windcheetah.co.uk, tel: 0161 928 5575.

For one-armed riders preferring to adapt a regular cycle, St John Street (SJS) showed me a one-arm brake lever which permits a cyclist to operate both brakes with one hand.

This was originally a part designed for use on tandems, but SJS tell me they now sell more of them for use by disabled cyclists.

www.sjscycles.com, tel: 01278 441500.

St John Street are part of Thorn Cycles, leading builder of modern touring tandems such as the Discovery (£2,499) and the Adventure (£1,599).

In a lower price range, the Voyager (£699) offers excellent value for a lightweight machine.

This tandem is also available in childback form, with lower rear seat, potentially a useful configuration where one partner has restricted growth. Such machines can also be valuable for parents with kids who might not be able to handle a solo cycle. For a larger family, their Me'n'U2 triplet (£1,199) carries two children as well as an adult.

Ayrshire engineering firm simple city showed a number of trailers, one of which was designed to be used behind a wheelchair. But does anybody want to use their wheelchair for major haulage? I am not convinced that this answers a major need. If any readers think otherwise, let me know and I'll arrange a test.

www.simple-city.com, tel: 0845 456 0928.

Cycle holidays, both in the UK and abroad, are a growing part of the leisure industry and there were a number of firms selling holidays exhibiting.

None of them, however, seem to have any specific facilities for disabled riders.

The situation still seems to be that riders who already have adapted cycles will normally be welcome to take their own bikes, but the companies are making no provision for people who are not already regular cyclists.

This seems a pity – a cycling holiday can be a valuable way to gain experience and confidence – but the firms are presumably also failing to meet

basic responsibilities under the Disability Discrimination Act.

I was also surprised how few electric assist cycles were on show.

These have become a significant form of transport for a growing number of people who do not have the strength to use a regular cycle for any distance, or who can manage on the flat but not uphill.

Unfortunately one of the two firms selling electric assist cycles, Yamaha – which sold the top, though most expensive cycle, when we tested such bikes – have withdrawn from this market.

There was one exception, an important newcomer to the field. Bliss Bikes, of Horsham, have produced a series of lightweight electric bikes, including models like Extreme Bliss and Trail Bliss intended for off-road riding, with mudguards, bottle cage and optional rear carrier. City Bliss is being marketed for urban riding. (The differences are decorative – the basic specs are identical in all models.)

At £699, these look like being a major addition to the market. The firm also showed me their "U-frame" bike, a brand new idea.

As many of the people who would benefit from electric assist also have problems mounting a cycle in the regular way, this is potentially a very important development.

www.blissbikes.co.uk, tel: 0870 241 8446.



Highlights from the show:

Above: the Windcheetah from Advanced Vehicle Design, "the best recumbent trike on the market"

Right: Trail Bliss from Bliss Bikes, a new lightweight electric bike which is a "major new addition to the market"

Below: the Voyager from Thorn Cycles, with lower back seat – ideal if one of the riders has restricted growth

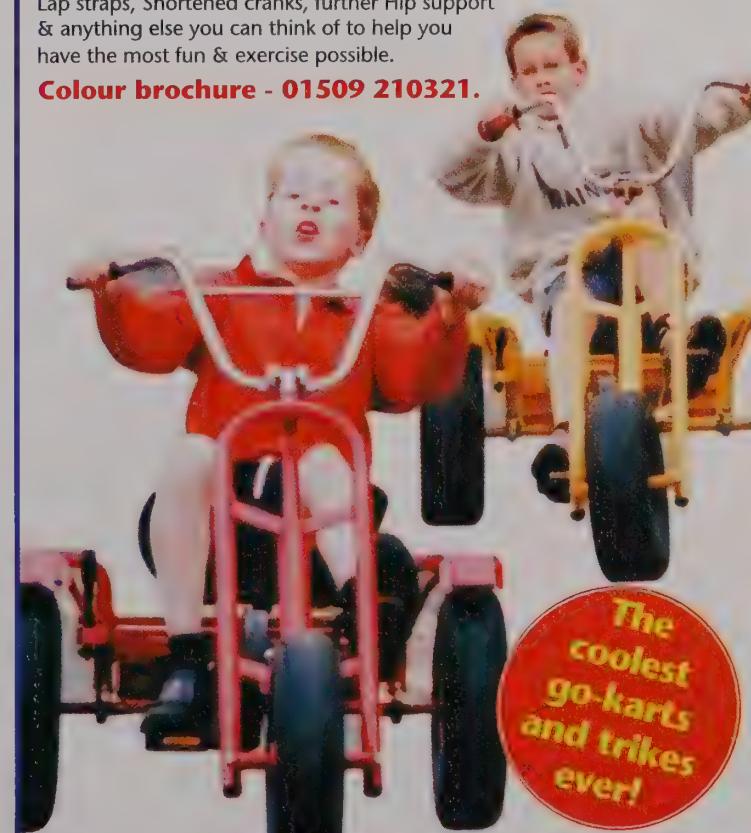


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ILLUSTRATION BY CLARE CURTIS

Dear Ann

- love and loneliness
- bereavement
- personal problems
- advice and support

Ann Darnbrough, who is disabled herself, is co-author of the *Directory for Disabled People* and other guides. Write to her at *Disability Now*, 6 Market Road, London N7 9PW or email your problem to editor@disabilitynow.org.uk



No care at home

I have had polio all my life and the effects are getting worse. Recently I broke my shin bone and although it has apparently healed, I have been told I will not be able to walk on it again.

My problem is that I have to be hoisted out of bed to use the toilet. This happens only at the home care's discretion. Naturally, I would like to use the toilet when I want to, and it is not comfortable to have to sit in a wheelchair for 12-14 hours waiting for someone to come and assist. It's driving me crazy. Can any of your readers help?

Mr Smith, Walthamstow
What you describe certainly isn't acceptable. First, I suggest you contact your doctor and ask to see a consultant.

Outsiders, BCM Box
Outsiders, London WC1N 3XX, tel: 020 7354 8291
web: www.outsiders.org.uk

VAT advice line:
tel: 0845 010 9000

Because your condition has worsened, you need a professional reappraisal of your condition.

It may be that you won't be able to put weight on your leg, but it is always wise to get a second opinion.

Next I suggest you contact your local councillor and describe the difficulties you are having.

They should be able to get things moving. Your local library will be able to give you your councillor's name and suggest how to make contact.

Finally, I suggest you approach Disability Action, Waltham Forest Association for People with Disabilities.

I'm sure they will be able to give you the practical advice you need.

Disability Action, Waltham Forest Association for People with Disabilities,
1a Warner Road,
London E17
tel: 020 8509 0812

Centre is closing

We have been told that our centre for mentally ill people in Plymouth is to close. Those of us who use the National Schizophrenia Fellowship Rethink Centre are deeply upset. The centre has done so much for us: we have made friends and had good times there.

We do have a Mind building, which anyone can go to, but to attend Rethink you have to be referred by a doctor.

Mr Powlesland, Plymouth
I am sorry to hear about the problems with your centre. It is always worth making a fuss when difficulties like this arise.

First of all, you should contact the authorities concerned and tell them how much you value the services provided and explain the way in which your life and the lives of others who have used it have been enhanced.

You might also contact your local newspaper regarding the closure of your centre.

'Benefits are all or nothing'

I am a wheelchair user of 40 and have been claiming Incapacity benefit for many years. I am currently getting paid work teaching for between two and four hours every few weeks. I hope that it will soon become a regular arrangement.

I am able to do this until the end of the year through the New Deal for Disabled People "Permitted Work Scheme".

My problem is that as soon as I earn a penny after that, my whole benefit will be stopped. I cannot afford to lose my benefit and psychologically, as well as financially, I need to do the work.

Because of some of the physical problems I have, working full time, or even 20 hours a week, would be almost impossible to sustain over a long period of time.

The benefits system seems to be very complicated – it is either all or nothing. What steps can I take to get some help?

Susan, Plymouth

It took a while to get the information needed, and even then it was not encouraging. I agree with you that the system is not helpful to people in your situation.

To quote the Department of Work and Pensions customer liaison: "Under the current Permitted Work rules, if a customer works less than 16 hours per week and earns under £67 per week, they can do 'permitted work' for up to six months. This period can be extended for a further six months if a job broker, personal adviser or disability employment adviser agrees that the work will help the customer move towards working 16 hours or more." After this, however, there has to be a gap of at least 52 weeks between "periods".

Tell them about the services provided and the friendships you have made. They like a good story.

Gardener's question

As a keen gardener, I have made adaptations to my garden so that I can move around it in my wheelchair. I recently contacted Customs and Excise to ask whether these adaptations qualified for zero VAT rating. They said no, even though I purchased the materials direct from the builder. Is this right?

Mr Gray, Blackpool

I am not qualified to give an expert opinion on the matter of materials for your garden, but it seems that materials can only be zero rated if they are supplied direct to a disabled person, whereas I understand they were supplied to your brother who was doing the work.

I suggest you ask Customs and Excise the precise reasons for its decision, as their reply seems to be unreasonable.

You could also contact the National VAT advice line. It pays to be persistent.

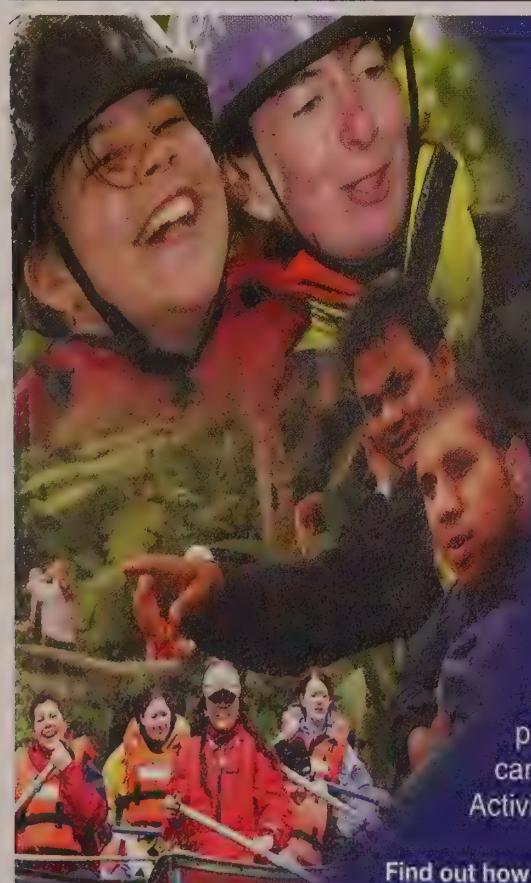
Correction

In *Share your problems* last month, we printed outdated contact details for the Outsiders club.

The correct address is printed in the contact box on the left. We apologise for any confusion caused.

Help at the end of the phone

DN's telephone counsellor Lin Berwick gives disabled people and carers advice and support on personal and spiritual problems. Disabled herself, Lin is a psycho-therapeutic counsellor and Methodist local preacher, with a postgraduate diploma in homeopathic medicine. If you have something you need to discuss in confidence, talk to her on Mondays 6pm-10pm and Thursdays 1pm-5pm, tel: 01787 882111.



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Activity options include canoeing, sailing, rock-climbing, abseiling, archery, pistol shooting and arts and crafts. Daytrips using accessible minibuses can be arranged to the Eden Project, Bodmin Moor and local historical sites.

Activities and daytrips can be arranged to reflect the National Curriculum.

Find out how you could turn your break into a fun-filled activity and learning experience by calling:

0845 345 1971

Email: churchtown@wft.org.uk Web: www.wft.org.uk

Churchtown, Lanlivery, Bodmin, Cornwall, PL30 5BT.

Churchtown is part of the Winged Fellowship Trust.

It's all in the detail...

The Volkswagen Sharan, Citroen Berlingo Multispace, Mercedes Vaneo, Fiat Multipla and Renault Kangoo (MPV) are all makes and models of car that are now widely converted.

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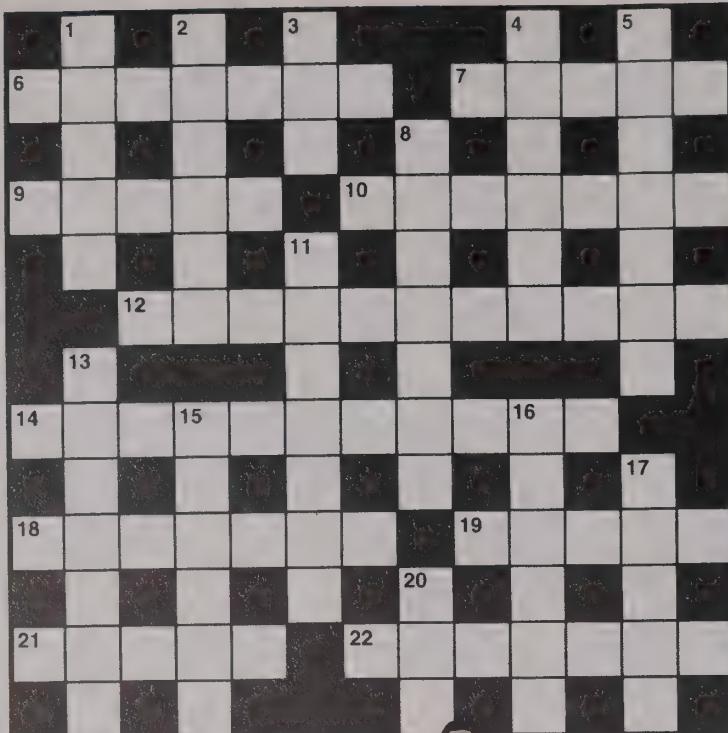
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ACROSS

6. Kenya's capital city (7)
7. Keegan, the Manchester City manager (5)
9. Mass of condensed water vapour floating in the sky (5)
10. Military attacks (7)
12. He has co-presented *Xchange*, a CBBC magazine programme (3,8)
14. Gwyneth Paltrow is soon to appear in a film about this famous poet (6,5)
18. And 16 Down. Eurostar is set to carry guide dogs through it for the first time (7,6)
19. Holiday photographs (5)
21. See 2 Down
22. Loss of memory (7)

DOWN

1. Bird of prey which is a symbol of the USA (5)
2. And 21 Across. Charlie Dimmock is a star of this programme (6,5)
3. This broadcaster has launched a new website dedicated to disability sport (3)
4. Sign of the zodiac, symbolised by twins (6)
5. Acid liquid made from wine, beer or cider (7)
8. This tragic Shakespearean character was married to Desdemona (7)
11. Chewy sweet made from sugar and milk (7)
13. Violent tropical storm (7)
15. Italian city famous for its canals (6)
16. See 18 Across
17. This country recently won the European Blind Football Championships (5)
20. Many studies have investigated the link between this jab and autism (3)

CROSSWORD BY JIM MCLAREN • ILLUSTRATIONS BY JAMIE TROUNCE
ANSWERS ON PAGE 47

Candid Kate



Katie Caryer lost her bottle, but not her nerve

Hello, dear readership, and welcome to my world.

If you are reading this because I am a youth, I have a piece of bad news. I will be 20 this month.

I am currently unsure what are the effects of the ageing process and I do advise you all to stop taking any notice of me. I might use this section of *DN* to treat you to an essay about knitting or something just as grannyized. You must get out while you can and save yourselves as soon as possible!

So enough of this rant about ageing; I know everybody gets older apart from Peter Pan who will be 100 years old next year. Does anyone else think this fact is very bizarre?

On to my life. Right – uni. After all, I did actually lose my bottle on the first week of it; my drinking bottle that is!

Really, I am getting into the swing of university ways and starting to get used to the classes, the area and the company. You never know, give me another billion years and I might get used to the very early mornings.

I think I have quite a reputation already on our course as a feisty girl, which I don't know what I feel about. It would help if some people stopped having the same response to a person in a wheelchair as they do to a little green man on their first meeting in this day and age. Now, come on, we all know which one of these two groups is on the telly more now.

Disabled Students' Allowance is a really cool idea. I got a spanking new computer out of mine. Cool. With it I should get all my equipment to access it. I have not got it all yet. It had better come soon. And the letter "p" on the keyboard isn't working. Better ask the computer guy who set it all up to give us a "p". And I don't think his name is Bob (your proof about my youth – it was a long time ago and it was mis-spent).

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Citroen Dispatch, 1.9 diesel, 02 reg, April 2000, 1700 miles, red, lowered floor plus ramp, one rear seat. £13,500.

Volkswagen Caravelle, 2.5 litre TDI, V reg, January 2000, white, 20,000 miles, automatic, air conditioning plus ramp or lift. POA.

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| Renault Master 2.5 Diesel | CKZ 8933 | Green | 5 Seats, Ramp | 26,000 | 10,495 |
| Nissan Vanette Versa 2.3 Diesel | W415 DKC | Blue | 4 Seats, Ramp, Winch | 27,739 | 8,795 |
| Nissan Vanette Versa 2.3 Diesel | W259 DKC | Red | 4 Seats, Ramp, Winch | 8,600 | 8,995 |
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INFORMATION

Mind has published *How to... Improve Your Mental Well-being*, a guide by Dorothy Rowe. The booklet, launched on World Mental Health Day in October, is aimed at promoting long-term mental well-being. It explores and explains mental health issues, and offers solutions to everyday problems. £1. Mind Publications, 15-19 Broadway, London, E15 4BQ. Tel: 020 8522 1743. Website www.mind.org.uk, email: publications@mild.org.uk

Contact a Family, the national charity for families with disabled children, has produced a new Group Action pack for parents who would

like to set up a local or national support group for people in a similar situation. The pack contains a series of individual guides with information and tips on all aspects of setting up and running a group. Free. Tel: freephone 0808 808 3555. Website: www.cafamily.org.uk, email: helpline@cafamily.org.uk

The Red Cross has published First Aid training resource pack for young people with special needs. It has been produced following a 12-month pilot programme which involved trained staff working with young people from youth groups, mainstream and special schools and residential

homes. The pack includes a training module, activities and information on a wide range of disabilities. £15. Tel: 0207 201 5430. Email: alloyd@redcross.org.uk

The Spinal Injuries Association has launched *Turning the Corner*, a wheelchair skills video that shows users how to get the most out of their wheelchair, whatever their level of disability. The video features people using their wheelchairs in a wide range of daily situations, and includes tips and advice. £19. Tel: 020 8444 2121.

Age Concern has published *Promoting Mobility for People*

with Dementia – a Problem-Solving Approach, the latest in its professional care series. The revised edition is designed to enable professionals, carers and family members to help people with dementia stay active. It draws on case experiences and includes practical advice. £14.99 Tel: 0870 4422120. Website: www.ageconcern.org.uk/shop

Policy Press has published *Parenting and Disability: Disabled Parents' Experiences of Raising Children*, by Richard Olsen and Harriet Clarke. The book explores the experiences of disabled parents within their social context, and addresses the disadvantages, barriers and

exclusion that they face. It includes in-depth interviews and reports on available services. £18.99. Tel: 01235 465500. Email: direct.orders@marston.co.uk

Correction

In our August issue, we published an incorrect contact number for Epilepsy Action's publication *New to Epilepsy – A Parent's Guide*. The correct number is 0808 8005050. We apologise for the confusion.

HOLIDAYS

Do you have any holiday experiences or tips that you would like to share with us? If so, contact Lucy Howard on 020 7619 7323,

email: lucy.howard@scope.org.uk

ATTENTION

DN cannot guarantee inclusion in a particular issue. Due to deadlines, please send details at the earliest opportunity.

If you would like your event listed here, please send details to the address on page 2.

DID YOU KNOW?

DN is available on tape, disk and by e-mail. Contact Talking Newspapers, see imprint, page 2.

What's on

The Springboard Charitable Trust is hosting the Employers' Conference on Disability at the Novotel, Heathrow, on 3 November. The theme is Vacancy to Valued Work, with a focus on helping employers in the hospitality, leisure, travel and tourism industries to understand the challenges and solutions of employing disabled people, enabling wider opportunities for disabled employees. There will be speakers from both the industry and disability organisations. £125, £75 concessions. Tel: 0207 4978654. For an online registration form see www.springboarduk.org.uk/disabilityconference/, email: info.London@springboarduk.org.uk

Disability Alliance is holding a half-day conference entitled The Additional Costs of Being a Disabled Parent at NCVO,

Regent's Wharf, on 4 November. It will address the additional costs that disabled parents face, and examine how they can get the financial support and services they need. Speakers from various organisations will be involved, including the BBC and the Disabled Parents Network. £25 non-members, £15 members. Tel: 020 7247 8776. Email: office.da@dial.pipex.com

Rethink Disability is hosting its annual conference, Is the Grass Greener in Europe?, at the Marriott Hotel in Ipswich on 7 November. It will compare care services in the UK with those in other European countries, and examine a wide range of issues affecting disabled people, including education, housing and leisure facilities. From £12.50. Tel: 01449 770127. www.rethink-disability.org.uk

Disabled Living and Kidz Up North are holding an exhibition and conference on 13 November at the Wembley Stadium in Bolton. There will be equipment for disabled children on display, as well as seminars on a range of issues affecting young people with disabilities, including mobility, transport and safety. Exhibition free; seminars variously priced. Tel: 0161 214 5959. Email: disabledliving@aol.com

Peapods is a new support and action group formed by parents of children with a range of physical disabilities in Wokingham and surrounding areas. The group is open to parents and carers who will be able to get support and advice from similar families. It meets at Wokingham hospital on the first Tuesday of each month, 7-9pm. Tel: 07946

252544. Email Jane Holmes at peapodsgroup@yahoo.co.uk

The National Autistic Society Wales holds its annual Autism Conference at the University of Wales Institute of Cardiff (UWIC) on 29 November. The conference will address recent advances in understanding autistic spectrum disorders, as well as the latest political developments, policies and services in Wales. Tel: 01792 815915. Website: www.nas.org.uk

The Discovery Scheme is a new social club for adults with Asperger syndrome, based in Cardiff. Jointly run by Cardiff University Students and the National Autistic Society (NAS) Wales, the club will help provide support and integration within the local community. Tel: Kate Wyndes at NAS, 01792 815915. Email: kwyndes@nas.org.uk

Websites

Leeds City Council has teamed up with various venues around the city to produce an online accessibility guide for disabled residents, as part of a nationwide project to mark the European Year of Disabled People. The site provides access information for over 1000 places for people with hearing, vision or mobility concerns, enabling them to check which venues are accessible before setting out. Residents and businesses can also air their views and contribute to the guide online. See www.DisabledGo.info

Affinity Services have relaunched their website to provide a comprehensive guide to voluntary organisations, including a telephone advisory service, professional viewpoints, web links and reports. See www.affinityservices.co.uk

ICIS (Independent Combined Information Services) in West Sussex has created a website for residents facing difficult or challenging personal or life circumstances. It provides information on services and support organisations in the area. See www.icis-info4life.org.uk and www.westsussexcarers.org.uk

The **No Limits** project is an exhibition of images celebrating the achievements of people with learning disabilities. The project, funded by the European Year of Disabled People, was produced by a team including people with learning disabilities themselves. Images from the exhibition, which has toured around Wales, can be seen on their website at www.nolimitsproject.org.uk

The Artsline-Online database is a new website giving disabled people accessibility information for arts venues around London. Designed for both residents and visitors to

the city, it is being expanded nationwide and allows the venues themselves to input data. See www.artsonline.com

DN WEBSITE UPDATE

The **DN** website discussion forum has been improved. To make it easier and quicker to communicate with other **DN** readers, we now have 16 forums covering:

- access • arts • communication • education •
- employment • equipment/technology • finance •
- health & disabilities • international topics • legislation
- leisure • politics • social issues • sport • transport & parking • other topics.

So, why not visit and have your say!

For Sale

Quality Used Adapted Vehicles

The biggest and best choice in the UK

Wheelchair Accessible & Wheelchair Drivers

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| W Galaxy Ghia TDi. Brotherwood hi top | £19,995 |
| V Toyota Hi-Aces. Ramps + 4 seats from | £8,485 |
| X Suzuki Wagon Auto Low floor & ramp | £10,495 |
| X Renault Kangoo low floors from | £9,995 |
| R VW 'wheelchair driver' fully equipped | £11,995 |
| R VW Sharan TDi Auto. Brotherwood hi top | £12,995 |
| 51 Renault Kangoo low floors from | £11,995 |
| X VW Caravelle diesels. Ramps/winches | £12,495 |
| 52 Peugeot Expert diesel low floors from | £12,995 |
| Y VW fully automated wheelchair driver | £19,995 |
| W Fiat Ulysse lowered rear floor / ramp | £11,995 |
| Y Nissan Vannette diesel. Ramp / 4 seats | £10,995 |

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| 2002 02 Citroen Relay HDi, 8 seats, ramp, 1,000 miles | £14,500 |
| 2002 02 Mercedes Vito 110 CDi, 1 owner, 8,000 miles | £13,995 |
| 2001 Y Peugeot Expert Constables, 25,000 miles, 4 seats | £12,500 |
| 2001 Y Master, 1 owner, 19,000 miles, lift | £14,995 |
| 2000 W Renault Espace Hill Grau, 9,000 miles, A/C | £18,995 |
| 2000 W VW LWB, Side lift, 32,000 miles | £12,750 |
| 2000 V Sharan Automotive TDi, 2 owners, 11,000 miles, A/C | £14,995 |
| 2000 V Mercedes Vito, Drive from wheelchair | £POA |
| 1999 V Escort Chairman diesel, 44,000 miles, PAS, 1 owner | £8,750 |
| 1998 S Sharan Brotherwood TDi, raised roof, 1 owner, 62,000 miles, A/C | £15,995 |
| 1998 S VW TD, with Tail lift, 42,000 miles | £8,750 |
| 1998 R Ford Courier Auto, P.A.S. Universal, 2 owners, 11,000 miles | £7,495 |
| 1998 R Mercedes Sprinters, with tail lifts, low mileage diesels | from £12,995 |
| 1998 R Peugeot Expert Chairman, 1 owner, 42,000 miles | £8,495 |
| 1997 R Toyota Hiace Petrol, 1 owner, 53,000 miles, lift | £8,250 |
| 1996 P VW Caravelle Chairman, Auto, 73,000 miles | £9,500 |
| 1993 L Vanette Versa 1.5, Tail lift, 50,000 miles | £3,495 |
| 1989 G Brotherwood Prairie SLX, Auto, 80,000 miles | £5,750 |
| Kangoo & Berlingo models | Choice of 9 |
| Trafic & Vanette Cargo models | Choice of 12 |

A selection of 60 WAVs from £2,750 fully serviced with warranty. Demo and delivery anywhere in UK mainland free. Part exchange and vehicles sought for purchase.

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All models wanted and for sale.
Ring Free anytime
0800 074 6834
All major credit cards accepted

Accessible Vehicle Register

We specialise in locating used vehicles to suit the specific needs of our customers. If you are looking for an accessible vehicle or have one to dispose of, contact Adam Price. We also supply and install all forms of access equipment.

01202 814112
adam.price@lineone.net

Bekker rear entry wheelchair friendly Renault Kangoo 1.4 RXE with only 6,000 recorded miles, can be yours for only £7,950. 3 or 5 seater with lowering rear suspension. Tel: 01377 241700. (Trade)

1998 S Ford Fiesta 1.6 Finesse
3 door fitted Constable conversion to include electric wheelchair with remote controlled power lift. Only 8,000 miles, fitted air con and spotless condition. Can deliver £6500. Wentworth Motors, Fishermans Walk, Southbourne, Bournemouth, 01202 425606.

MAYDAY PRODUCTS
Help protect your wheelchair on board planes, boats, trains and cars.
WHEELCHAIR TRAVEL BAG® 2003
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email: maydayuk@oxfree.com
Tel: 01491 680103.

Recruitment (on pages 41 to 46)

Safe roads, Reliable journeys, Informed travellers

**DRIVING CHANGE****West Midlands**

As an Executive Agency of the Department for Transport, we're not afraid of responsibility - we're already in charge of nearly 6,000 miles of motorways and trunk roads. But now we're about to take our role further, taking over the responsibility for traffic management working in partnership with the police to keep the traffic moving. It's an exciting challenge for us - and the people that join us.

These are senior roles where you can really make an impact - on the new organisation and its procedures - on our partnership with the Police and contractors - and on road safety, journey reliability and the environment. We need experienced managers with confidence and authority who have a good understanding of the transport infrastructure - and a real drive to improve it. The importance of the overall service itself is such that these positions require flexibility with regard to working hours as you will be part of a rotating shift pattern covering days, nights and weekends.

Network Operations Manager

£45,009 - £49,240 pa (starting salary) plus benefits

Ref: THA44/1018

This is a pivotal role for establishing and maintaining the new traffic responsibilities. A high achiever with the ability to operate at a strategic level, you will be responsible for the performance of the Regional Control Centre (RCC) area, developing targets and action plans, agreeing area budget and contributing to centralised work plans for planned motorways and building.

With a background in customer service, you will have at least five years' experience in an operational role, which includes three years' managerial responsibility OR be educated to degree level with three years' experience in an operational role to include two years' managerial responsibility. A clean driving licence is essential.

With a talent for dealing with people, whether you're empowering them to perform, developing relationships with partner organisations or taking part in high-level negotiation within a fast-moving and demanding environment. You must be able to make timely decisions after analysing the available information.

Traffic Operations Managers

£34,500 - £37,500 pa (starting salary) plus benefits and up to 12% shift allowance Ref: THA44/1019

In these predominantly office based roles, you will work closely with, and deputise for, the Network Operations Manager. Planning and controlling the effective management of services for the RCC area, you will also attend incidents when they escalate. You will ensure the team is able to achieve and exceed its objectives by providing training opportunities and recognising and rewarding good performance.

You must have at least three years' management experience in a fast-moving and demanding operational role OR be educated to degree level with two years' experience in an operational role (to include one year's managerial responsibility). Calm and controlled under pressure, you will have a basic understanding of network, traffic and incidents management. It is essential that you are a competent driver with a clean driving licence.

Alongside the ability to really make a difference to the UK's roads, we offer competitive remuneration, Civil Service pension arrangements and 30 days holiday from the start of your employment. Although initially based in Perry Barr, Birmingham, both positions will relocate to Quinton, Birmingham in November 2004. If you're ready for the challenge, we're ready to hear from you!

For an application pack and further written information, please contact Dina Markey (our representative at CPG HR Services) on 020 7562 1653, fax 020 7588 8013, email highways@centrepointrgroup.co.uk or write to CPG HR Services, 16 St Helens Place, London EC3A 6DP, quoting the relevant reference. Alternatively, you can apply online at www.centrepointrgroup.co.uk

The closing date for receipt of applications is 7th November 2003.

The Highways Agency is an equal opportunities employer. We value diversity and we positively welcome applications from all sections of the community. We operate a guaranteed interview scheme for disabled people who meet the minimum criteria.

An Executive Agency of the
Department for Transport

**Make a difference...****WHEATSHEAF TRUST****Wheatsheaf Trust runs projects which help mainly**

disadvantaged people to gain confidence and find employment or learning opportunities. It also helps employers to make best use of the skills available to them. We are extending our services and need an energetic, talented individual to fill the following role.

Senior Careers Adviser

You will support the Employment & Training Manager in overseeing and co-ordinating the delivery of services to our clients. You will carry out client needs assessment and careers guidance, maintain resources and materials, and help with job/learning search activities. You will have at least 2 years' experience as a qualified Careers Adviser, including six months supervising/organising services, and be a strong communicator/motivator. Interview/selection date Thursday 20th November

To apply please telephone (023) 8023 7662 or e-mail info@wheatsheaftrust.org. The application form can be submitted on paper or by e-mail as a Word document. We particularly welcome applications from disabled people and members of black and minority ethnic communities.

The post could be open to job-share, or flexible working.

Closing date for applications: 5.00 p.m. Tuesday 4th November 2003.

**SEEDA**

North East Devon Development Agency



European Social Fund

**TOYOTA COROLLA (N reg)**

1995, white, auto, 3-door hatchback, 81k miles, pas, r/h fitted Brig-Ayd hand controls + l/r accelerator. £1,150. Tel: 01483 237668 (Guildford). (Trade).

DEADLINES – DN Extra November 2003 published 7 November.

Classified deadlines: Booking & Copy: 29 October

• Recruitment (on pages 41 to 46)

Support for disabled people

If you have a disability or health condition that affects your chances of finding or keeping a job, ask to see a Disability Employment Adviser, based in your local Jobcentre or Jobcentre Plus office.

They can provide:

- help with finding and keeping a job
- information on training
- support with benefit entitlement and programmes like New Deal; and
- advice on employing people with disabilities.



Contact your local Jobcentre or Jobcentre Plus office for further information.

www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk

JobCentre

jobcentreplus

Part of the Department for Work and Pensions

www.jobsatessex.co.uk

All things being equal, we wouldn't need you.
But they're not, so we're seeking a talented individual to move our disability equality agenda forward.

To find out more about this key role of Disability Partnership Co-Ordinator, please visit www.jobsatessex.co.uk



• Public appointments (also see page 46)



Governors at Hereward College

The College has vacancies from time to time on its Board of Governors and invites expressions of interest from those who would like to be considered for appointment as a governor.

You should hold a responsible position in business or the professions or be involved in public service to the wider community. Expressions of interest would be particularly welcome from people with disabilities, with ethnic minority backgrounds and/or with experience in financial services.

The role of governor (which is unpaid) is an opportunity to contribute to the strategy and direction of an expanding and successful College with a strong sense of mission.

Further information may be obtained from the Clerk to the Governors, Hereward College, Bramston Crescent, Tile Hill Lane, Coventry, CV4 9SW (tel: 024 7642 6133; e-mail: karenrobinson@hereward.ac.uk)

An equal opportunity employer with BS EN ISO 9002 accreditation.

• Holidays

HOLIDAY BUNGALOWS BUILT FOR DISABLED PEOPLE

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OVERHEAD TRACKING,
ELECTRIC HOISTS, HI/LO BEDS, FULLY EQUIPPED
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GAER COTTAGES

"HOLIDAY CARE AWARD WINNERS"
Quality self-catering cottages for ALL the family with an emphasis on facilities for disabled visitors. 6 of the 9 traditional Welsh stone cottages are single storey, easily accessible from the car park. Luxurious indoor heated swimming pool with hoist. Games room. Open ALL YEAR.
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WHEELCHAIR ACCESSIBLE HOLIDAY COTTAGE IN RURAL FRANCE

Charming cottage in Dordogne region available for rent. Reasonable rates. If you are looking for peace and quiet, warm weather, good food and wine, this is the place for you. Call or fax Ed Passant on 01233 731 097 or e-mail: ed.passant@mail.com web: www.accessholidays.com

Cornwall - Accessible Country Lodges
Purpose-built for disabled guests. Sleeps six people. Minutes from beaches and Eden Project. Includes use of communal indoor swimming pool and bar. Call Winged Fellowship Trust: 0845 345 1971. www.wft.org.uk Registered Charity No. 295072

ALGARVE - PORTUGAL

Lots of villas, farmhouses, bungalows, hotels, B&B, car hire with hand controls, adapted vans and plenty to see and do. Contact: David Player Tel: 00 351 289 393636 Fax: 00 351 289 397448 E-mail: dave@player.pt

www.player.pt

BE NEXT TO THE SEA AT HEYSHAM

Magnificent view, miles of level promenade. Wheelchair friendly, tracking and portable hoists. Bakare beds, mobile chair for ensuite shower/toilet. 3 bedrooms/lounge/dining kitchen/study/tv/dvd. Close to Lakeland, Bowland, RSPB reserves etc. Free cycles and telescope use. For more information and bookings, telephone Allan or Jan on: 01274 588142.

PENROSE BURDEN NORTH CORNWALL "Holiday Care Award Winners"

Holiday Cottages designed for wheelchair users and their families. Rural setting with superb views. Dogs welcome. Wood burning stoves and daily meal service. Please ring or write for colour brochure.

R&N Hall, Penrose Burden, St Beward, Bodmin, Cornwall PL30 4LZ. Telephone Bodmin (01208) 850277 or 850617

Brittany Cottage to let. Adapted for wheelchair use. Good access to beaches. Sleeps up to 6. Details **C. Hodgson**. Tel (01924) 499220.

Near Salisbury - newly converted stable block self-catering units. Ground floor 1 double/twin bedroom en-suite wheel-in shower. Upstairs 1 double, 1 single, shower room. Open plan kitchen & living room. Patio & shared garden. ETB category 2, 4-star highly commended. Non-smoking. Prices from £195 pw. Available all year. Tel: 01722 349002, e-mail: mail@old-stables.co.uk, www.old-stables.co.uk

The Algarve, Portugal

Small hotel owned and run by English family. Home from home. Happy and friendly. Home cooked food. Diets catered for. All bedrooms en-suite. Our own swimming pool and grass bowling green. Golfing bookings can be made. We are fully equipped for wheelchair users, their families and friends. Met at Faro airport. For brochures and flights with A.T.O.L. agents, tel: 00 351 289 396589, fax: 00 351 289 394924.

South of France winter sun

Carcassonne, Cathar Castles, fully accessible bungalow sleeps 3 or 4. English owner next door. For brochure call 01953 452145 or 00 33 468 78 87 61.

• Awards

• Recruitment (on pages 41 to 46)



Multiple Sclerosis Society



MILLENNIUM AWARDS

Changing Lives - Opening Doors

The MS Society Millennium Awards Scheme offers you a chance to do something new, exciting and interesting and then empower you to pass on your new skills to the community. Examples of Winning projects include:

- ▶ Creative Writing Workshops ▶ Disability Activity Days
- ▶ Counselling Workshops ▶ Local MS Newsletters
- ▶ Reiki Therapy Training ▶ Yoga Classes

If you would like to do something similar or have an idea of your own, contact the MS Society Awards Team on 020 8438 0700 or email millennium.awards@mssociety.org.uk

Hurry as time is running out!

Applications will only be accepted until November 2003



A MILLENNIUM AWARD SCHEME
SUPPORTED BY FUNDS FROM THE NATIONAL LOTTERY

• Tenders

Disability Rights Commission

Expressions of Interest for Funding Project

Suitable contractors are invited to tender for the following DRC contract (England, Wales and Scotland):

Commissioned research into the level of support offered to, and the barriers perceived by, general applicant organisations, when applying to public funding regimes. A particular focus of the research will be the implications of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995.

The successful bidder will be expected to have knowledge of:-

- Public funding streams and funding criteria.
- Built environment, access and disability issues.

The deadline will be 28th November 2003.

For further information contact:-

Rosemarie Lees or Heather Hunt, Disability Rights Commission, 2nd Floor, Arndale House, Arndale Centre, Manchester. M4 3AQ

Tel: 0161 261 1808/1789 Fax: 0161 261 1800

Email: good.practice@drc-gb.org

Change by advice, conciliation and legal enforcement

• Services



BIRKDALE PAEDIATRIC & ADULT NEURO CLINIC

Advice and treatment for babies and children.

Conditions treated are movement and learning difficulties, posture and balance, walking and balance, coordination and hand function

Cerebral palsy, and children with neurological conditions
Farshideh Bondarenko DIP (PHYSIO) MCSP SRP
website: www.neuro-physio.co.uk

Tel: 020 8998 9403

Are you sick, disabled or in pain?
Do you suffer from muscle spasms?
Are you fed up with pharmaceutical medicine? Would you like to try the natural alternative? Please ring T.H.C.
07708 145617. The Herb Connection, the natural alternative.

DISCLAIMER - DN is not responsible for claims made in the adverts it prints. Readers are advised to check claims with advertisers before relying on them.

Technical Manager

A National Role With A Commercial Brief!

Based North West

Attractive Negotiable Salary + Car & Benefits

Represented under the brand name of 'Tor Filters', our Barrow based filtration operation is a fast developing, specialist business within our Workscope Division.

This is a key post, reporting directly to Workscope's Commercial Manager, with responsibility for co-ordinating and managing business development and improvement projects, which will add both visible and measurable value to medium/long term business strategies.

With a brief to extend our product range and applications, as well as build on an already impressive client base, you'll be responsible for supporting a variety of technical and business development activities, with a view to enhancing the overall Remploy proposition.

As a recognised filtration specialist, with proven management experience, you should be a first class presenter, able to demonstrate excellent communication and negotiation skills, plus a good combination of technical and commercial awareness.

If that's backed by high levels of energy and personal integrity, along with the ability to introduce and manage change, inspired by the confidence to challenge the status quo, then we can offer an attractive package and genuine prospects for career advancement in the short to medium term.

Employment Advisors

Interwork - Attractive Package + Car Allowance

(i) Based Aberdeen

(ii) Based Leeds/Bradford

(iii) Ideally Based Norwich - Covering Norfolk

(iv) South Notts/Leics - Ideally based Loughborough/Leics
(v) Ideally Based Reading/Newbury - M4 Corridor Covering South Oxon, Bucks, Berks & Hampshire

Working in partnership with over 2,500 employers nationwide, Remploy Interwork has already supported over 5,500 disabled people back into open employment across the UK.

As an integral member of the Interwork area team, you'll manage an allocated workload, providing support and guidance to both employers and employees, whilst also monitoring, evaluating and reporting on progress made.

With a brief to achieve set performance objectives, in terms of meaningful employment, development and progression, as well as the transition of employees on WORKSTEP and NDDP programmes, your chief aim will be to ensure that jobs and clients are successfully matched and lead to positive outcomes.

Working closely with Host Companies, you must be a first class relationship builder and communicator, with proven experience in a development or employment related role, who ideally has practical knowledge of working with disabled people.

In addition, a good understanding of modern employment practices and H & S regulations will be required - although the key to your success will be the ability to work with a full range of business partners and enable individuals to progress in both skills and confidence.

Remploy

Opportunity & Enterprise - Working Together



SCOPE

Executive Director Human Resources

Please see the next issue of Disability Now Extra on the 7 November for details of this important post at Scope.

For further information or to register your interest in receiving further information, please contact our retained consultant, Tribal GWT, on 0870 241 9031 or email scope@tribalgwt.com

Personal direct experience and/or knowledge of disability and disability issues would be an advantage.

www.tribalgwt.com

• Recruitment (on pages 41 to 46)

Disability Rights Commission

www.drc-gb.org

Campaigns Officer

Starting salary £19,810

London

We need an experienced and dedicated campaigner to support our high-profile campaigns to secure civil rights for disabled people.

You will forge links with external organisations, devise strategies to support our campaigns, and develop relationships with other key departments and our colleagues in Wales and Scotland.

You will be required to write reports, represent the DRC at external meetings and provide materials for outside organisations, the media and our own website, thinking creatively around the best ways to communicate our messages and get our voice heard. You will also help develop evaluation techniques to monitor campaign effectiveness.

Having worked in a similar role, you will have experience of issue-based campaigns and relationship-building with external bodies. Your commitment to diversity will match your good understanding of disability issues.

For an application pack, available in a wide variety of formats, please call 0161 261 1730. Minicom: 0161 261 1702.

E-mail: hr@drc-gb.org Please quote reference CO1.

Closing date: 21st November 2003.

Interviews: 11th December 2003.

DISABILITY RIGHTS COMMISSION IS COMMITTED TO EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY AND WELCOMES APPLICATIONS FROM ALL SECTIONS OF THE COMMUNITY



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Safe roads. Reliable journeys. Informed travellers

HIGHWAYS AGENCY

DRIVING THE TEAM FORWARD West Midlands

As an Executive Agency of the Department for Transport, we're not afraid of responsibility - we're already in charge of nearly 6,000 miles of motorways and trunk roads. But now we're about to take our role further, taking over the responsibility for traffic management working in partnership with the Police. It's an exciting move for us - and the people that join us.

Traffic Operations Supervisors (up to 30)

£21,750 - £25,584 pa (starting salary) plus benefits and up to 20% shift allowance

This role is all about people skills. Not only will you coach and motivate your team to excel, you'll also build strong relationships with partner agencies such as the Police, other emergency services and Incident Support Units. In addition, you'll contribute to the improvement of on-road performance, protocols and procedures.

A proven communicator and negotiator, you will have three years' experience in an operational role OR one year's experience of supervision and customer service together with a GCSE level education. Good IT skills and a clean driving licence will be essential. As the role incorporates on-road and office duties, the flexibility to adapt well to the ever-changing environment will be key. The importance of the overall service itself is such that you must be flexible with regard to working hours as you will be part of a rotating shift pattern covering days, nights and weekends.

Alongside the ability to really make a difference to the UK's roads, we offer competitive remuneration, Civil Service pension arrangements and 30 days holiday from the start of your employment. If you're ready for the challenge, we're ready to hear from you.

For an application pack and further written information, please contact Dina Markey (our representative at CPG HR Services) on 020 7562 1653, fax 020 7588 8013, email highways@centrepointrgroup.co.uk or write to CPG HR Services, 16 St Helens Place, London EC3A 6DP, quoting Ref: THA45/1020.

Alternatively, you can apply online at www.centrepointrgroup.co.uk

The closing date for receipt of applications is 7th November 2003.

The Highways Agency is an equal opportunities employer. We value diversity and we positively welcome applications from all sections of the community. We operate a guaranteed interview scheme for disabled people who meet the minimum criteria.

An Executive Agency of the
Department for
Transport



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

HOW TO REPLY

To reply to a personal ad indicate the Box Number and mark the envelope

Private and Confidential. If you do not it will be opened. Send it to DN, address on page 2.



COMMUNITY FUND
Lottery money making a difference

KINGSTON CENTRE FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING (KCIL)

ACCESS OFFICER NJC S01, Point 29, + OLW (£22,797)

A well-established organisation of disabled people, KCIL requires a new Access & Participation Officer, to facilitate and run our Access Service. This will involve:

- Developing our Access Service and raising the profile of KCIL in respect of Access provision within the Borough
- Actively campaigning for accessible transport within the Borough by working closely with other associated groups
- Making on-site visits

The post-holder will need to have:

- a good understanding of the Social Model of Disability
- some experience in reading plans
- basic knowledge of guidance & best practice in the access field
- report writing skills
- enthusiasm and commitment to promoting equality

This is an excellent opportunity to learn and develop a career in the access field.

This post is funded by the Community Fund for 3 years.

For further details and an application pack (please state preferred format: large print, audio, Braille) please telephone 020 8255 2444 (minicom) or fax us on 020 8255 2441, or e-mail robert.reilly@kcil.org.uk.

Please quote reference: ACC

Closing date is: 7th Nov 2003 Interview date: 17th Nov 2003

Incontact

www.incontact.org

PROJECT MANAGER (SCOTLAND)

£23,500 plus pension, fixed term for three years.

Based in Scotland, with occasional visits to London office

Incontact is a leading UK organisation for people with bladder and bowel problems. We aim to provide support and information for people with these common but stigmatised conditions, and to raise awareness of the help that is available and to address areas of unmet need.

This is an exciting new role for a self-motivated person with enthusiasm and drive. You will work closely with local health services and volunteers to develop information materials and a network of support groups. You will be responsible for providing training and support for group co-ordinators, and raising awareness of the project. We are looking for someone who can communicate well both with consumers and professionals, and who will be able to manage their own time and workload.

For more information and an application pack, please call 0870 770 3246 or e-mail info@incontact.org. The closing date for applications is Friday 14th November 03.

www.incontact.org
0870 770 3246

COMMUNITY FUND
Lottery money making a difference

DEADLINES

Disability Now December 2003 published

22 November classified deadlines:

Booking: 7 November. Copy: 11 November.

CONDITIONS

Disability Now maintains the right to amend or withdraw lineage adverts without prior notice.

All adverts must comply with the British Code of Advertising Practice.

Telephone numbers and addresses will not be placed in personal adverts, for confidentiality. Instead, Box numbers will be provided. Likewise, telephone numbers and addresses will not be given out over the telephone if requested.

Box Numbers can be requested for non-personal adverts. However, it may limit the response to it. If you want to advertise documents, goods or services contact Patrick Durham-Matthews (tel: 020 7619 7320), fax: 020 7619 7331.

Lineage adverts can only be used by private individuals. All commercial enquiries must be addressed to Richard Gresham (see contact details above).

DN cannot accept responsibility for loss or damage of adverts or letters during forwarding. It is the responsibility of the advertiser to check the content of their advert, and to ensure any abbreviations cannot be misunderstood.

- Recruitment (on pages 41 to 46)



www.aimsgroup.co.uk

Aim for Consultancy with AIMS

OPPORTUNITIES FOR DISABILITY CONSULTANT ACROSS THE UK

The Aims group who were recently acquired by Alfred McAlpine Group, provides consultancy and training in:

Disability Issues
Asbestos Survey
Generalist Health and Safety
Water & Air Hygiene
Fire
Environmental
Construction Safety
Construction - Design and Management
Occupational Health

The company also plays a leading part in the Independent Safety Consultants Association, and runs its own UKAS approved laboratory.

AIMS Group has exciting growth plans. To facilitate these plans for growth we need to recruit expert, professional and customer focused consultants to join the organisation, across the UK, to help deliver the contracts we are winning. Part of a distributed team, you will be self-sufficient and able to work on your own initiative, often working alone on client-site or from home.

If you want to be part of this vision for growth, we currently have a number of vacancies for Disability consultants.

Candidates must have 2+ years of experience of identifying and assessing disability related Health and Safety issues and be fully conversant with DDA part M & BS8300 2001.

Must be a strong team player with the ability to work toward the facilitation of relationships and progress.

We are looking to grow our Disability team on an ongoing basis but will also consider individuals looking for employment on an associate basis.

The Aims group offer a competitive remuneration package, including company car, pension, bonus scheme and other benefits.

To apply, please email your CV to our retained consultants, Clarify Business Solutions, at:
AIMSGroup@Clarify-Solutions.co.uk or write to: Aims Group, Towcester Rd, Greens Norton, Northants NN12 8BL

• Public Appointments

department for
education and skills
creating opportunity, releasing potential, achieving excellence

OFFICE OF THE SCHOOLS ADJUDICATOR

DabB

Life Options

Salary SO2/PO32 £25,563.00 inc. OLW

Disability Action in the Borough of Barnet is seeking to recruit a Development Officer for its Life Options project. The Officer will promote independent living and the benefits of Direct Payments to people living in residential care who are the responsibility of LB Barnet. This full time project is initially funded for three years by Community Care in London Borough of Barnet.

The ideal applicant will have:

- Experience of Direct Payments
- Experience of work with disabled people
- A commitment to independent living

For an application please contact the office at: Jaspal Dhani, Director, DabB, 954 High Road, North Finchley, London N12 9RX

Tel: 020 8446 6935 Minicom: 020 8343 7632 Fax: 020 8446 3763

Email: disability@dabb.org.uk www.dabb.org.uk

Closing date: Friday 14th November 2003

Interview date: Friday 21st November 2003



Office of the
Schools
Adjudicator

Schools Adjudicators - 3 posts

The Secretary of State for Education and Skills invites applications for Schools Adjudicator posts. Schools Adjudicators make decisions on school organisation proposals which have not been resolved locally, and on complaints about school admission arrangements. Appointment will be for 3 years, from 1 April 2004.

The Post

- The Schools Adjudicators will decide whether to approve proposals for schools to open, close or change size, character or age range. This involves evaluating all the evidence and local views, with regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State.
- S/he will decide whether to uphold objections to admission arrangements, received from local education authorities, school governing bodies or parents. This involves considering the merits of each case, with regard to guidance in the School Admissions Code of Practice.
- S/he will also consider whether to allow variations to admission arrangements already decided.
- Some Adjudicators may be invited to undertake additional consultancy work on school organisation matters, under a separate contract.
- The post will be part-time, on a self employed basis, working mainly from home. We provide IT and support staff (in the Office of the School Adjudicator based in Darlington). Some travel will be involved, to local public hearings and adjudicator meetings or training events.

THE DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION AND SKILLS IS COMMITTED TO MAKING APPOINTMENTS ON MERIT BY FAIR AND OPEN PROCESS.

The Person

Schools Adjudicators will:-

- have wide experience of education or education planning at a senior level;
- be able to act independently and impartially;
- demonstrate keen analytical skills; and
- have highly developed communication and presentational skills.

Applicants must be able to make themselves available for adjudicator work for a minimum of 40 days between 1 April and 31 March, including at least 20 days between 1 June and 31 August.

The Adjudicators - currently a team of 9 - are led by a Chief Adjudicator who allocates cases, and ensures quality and consistency in adjudications. Though initially appointed by the Secretary of State, Schools Adjudicators act independently of the Department.

For an information pack, please send a postcard bearing

your name, address and the reference SCHADJ to
Mrs Alex Daventry-Claridge at: DfES, Level 1E, Caxton House,
6-12 Tothill Street, London SW1H 9NA.
Or, e-mail to: pba.team@dfes.gsi.gov.uk

Completed application forms should be returned no later than 12 November 2003.

Applications are particularly welcomed from women, members of ethnic minorities and disabled people.

HOW TO REPLY

To reply to a personal ad indicate the Box Number and mark the envelope Private and Confidential. If you do not it will be opened. Send it to DN, address on page 2.

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• closing date for entrants: 21.11.03 • Entrants must be over 18 • No proof of purchase required • UK entrants only • No cash alternatives • Winners notified by post • Editor's decision is final • Special offers not open to DN staff or associates • Winners may be announced in DN • In association with TGA Electric Limited. We may use your name and address for further marketing purposes. Please tick the box if you do not wish your details to be included

DN next month



What surprises are in store for you this Christmas?

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● BAYWATCH SURVEY

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● FANCY SKIING?

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